NADIR

A graphic interpretation of dispossession and aspects of conflict.

A series of twenty-four photographs and sixteen screen-printed off-set lithographs presented for the degree of Master of Fine Art at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town.

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But go thy way till the end
be: for thou shalt rest, and stand
in thy lot at the end of the days. Daniel 12 v. 13.

PREFACE

Dispossession, aspects of conflict and the breakdown of the relationship between people and their environment is the subject of this thesis.

The body of work presented consists of twenty-four photographs and sixteen screen-printed off-set lithographs (referred to as the prints). The photographs are largely intended to introduce and contextualize the prints which act as the main body and conclusion of the thesis. In the series of prints I have manipulated certain photographic imagery in order to explore the ways in which meaning can shift with changes in context, and reveal associations not apparent in the original photographs.

This book is divided into four sections:

1. **Sources and context**

This section contains a brief outline of the historical tradition of apocalyptic literature and its relevance to our times, as well as a discussion of some of the literary texts to which I have referred.

All the visual source material for my prints was derived from my own photographs. As a result, I have not looked to other artist's works for reference, or for the development of my theme. Of great importance, however, were the texts I read during the course of my study, which included a wide and diverse range of literature and poetry. I have also looked to film as a source, including popular cinema such as George Miller's "Mad Max" series, as well as the more serious aspects of cinema, for example, the films of Francis Ford Coppola, Werner Herzog and Wim Wenders.

While my prints do not necessarily fall within the mainstream of apocalyptic, they have in common with it, a particular attitude towards the present. It is the vision of imminent chaos and the desire for a return to a restored natural order that has informed my work.

2. **My working methods and their implications**

This section contains an explication of the processes involved in the making of the prints, and the manner in which these processes contributed to the meaning of the images. Also included is a discussion of the relationship between my photography and my printmaking.

3. **Introduction to the work**

This section introduces my theme. In my photographs I have documented those aspects of southern African urban and rural landscape which reveal evidence of the erosion of the natural environment, as well as the physical manifestations of displacement. In my prints, I have disintegrated, translated and recontextualised these images. While the theme of my work lies within the broad context of apocalyptic, it is the individual's conflicts and sense of displacement within that context that has been of

particular interest to me. As the apocalypticist expressed the tensions and conflicts of his time in a language of symbols, so I have similarly presented a response to my environment.

It is not my intention in this section to present an interpretation of my work, but rather to highlight those aspects important to an understanding of the motives I had in making the images.

In addition, this book includes documentation of the photographs and prints, preparatory sketches and collages, reproductions of source photographs, and a selection of literary texts which informed the work.

...there wer that black leader waiting for me with his yeller eyes. Jus stanning there in the rain and waiting for me.

Dint see no other dogs jus only him. Looking at me and wagging his tail slow. Then he ternt and gone off easy looking back over his shoulder like he wantit me to foller so I follert. I ben waiting for it so long when the time come I jus done it.

Russell Hoban: Riddley Walker. p.70.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is for all my parents, with love and thanks.

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and to Howson Algraphy, for supplying the lithographic plates.

Finally, to those who contributed to a supportive working environment, and to all my friends, thanks.

I don't know what I am now. A whispering out of the dust. Dried blood on a sword and the sword has crumbled into rust and the wind has blown the rust away but still I am, still I am of the world, still I have something to say, how could it be otherwise, nothing comes to an end, the action never stops, it only changes, the ringing of the steel is sung in the stillness of the stone.

Russell Hoban: Pilgermann p.11

SOURCES AND CONTEXT

> The sad truth is that man's real life consists of a complex of opposites - day and night, birth and death, happiness and misery, good and evil. We are not even sure that one will prevail against the other, that good will overcome evil, or joy defeat pain. Life is a battleground. It always has been, and always will be; and if it were not so, existence would come to an end (Jung 1968:75).

The view of life as "a battleground" torn by conflicting forces has much in common with that held by the ancient Jewish apocalypticist. His task, however, was more than the delineation of the world as battleground. It was to reveal to his readers those as yet unknown "secret divine disclosures" (Koch 1972:16) which were "announced to him from beyond" (Schmithals 1975:14). These elucidated the corrupt, degenerate nature of this world, warned of its imminent annihilation, and prophesied the emergence of a second, greater age. Created by God, this age would supercede the old one, bringing with it eternal peace, and the return of the "golden age of Paradise" (Schmithals 1975:21).

Essentially a literary phenomenon, ancient apocalyptic emerged in Judaism between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D. as a widespread and significant movement, centered in Palestine. As a language of crisis, apocalyptic continued to surface during times of extreme oppression and persecution as a response to the suffering of a people (Russell 1978:6). For example, the spread of Hellenism in the second century B.C. and the threat it posed to Judaism, brought about the apocalyptic sections of the Book of Daniel, and the Roman persecutions gave rise to the Book of Revelation (the Apocalypse of John), (Hanson 1983:1). Although originally derived from the Greek noun 'apokalypsis' meaning 'revelation', the current use of the term 'apocalyptic', refers not only to the Jewish and early Christian literature of this period, but also characterizes a particular conjecture about the future of humankind and the world.

The apocalypticist managed to translate the events of his time into a richly symbolic language of bizarre fantasy and myth. It was this flair for the weird and grotesque that has caused much apocalyptic literature to be declared crude and perverted and, as a result, rejected or ignored. In this century however, apocalyptic has been 'rediscovered' (Russell 1978:5). After two world wars, with the testaments of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and a resultant nuclear technology fast moving out of our control, it becomes a reality that our 'apocalypse' is as close as the push of a button, or worse, "no further away than one error, human or electronic" (Hanson 1983:3). Life has become precarious, overshadowed by a sense of the end

of things. It is at a time like this, in need of spiritual upliftment, that apocalyptic, with its themes of "history's decline, imminent doom, and a new order beyond", has gained a new place in literature and art (Hanson 1983:3).

In Silent Spring (1982), Rachel Carson discusses the effects of toxic chemicals on animal and plant life, and argues:

> The history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings. To a large extent, the physical form and the habits of the earth's vegetation and its animal life have been moulded by the environment. Considering the whole span of earthly time, the opposite effect, in which life actually modifies its surroundings, has been relatively slight. Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species - man - acquired significant power to alter the state of his world (ibid: 23).

With its huge advances in science and technology, our era is separated from the world of the ancient apocalypticist by the command we now have over our destiny - the power to alter and perhaps destroy our planet. Apocalypse today is a scientific rather than a religious phenomenon. It is humankind alone, not God, who is responsible for the future.

In the wake of atrocity and horror caused by war, and with the dawn of a nuclear, atomic age, a widespread shift emerged in the 'Zeitgeist' of the post war years. In both the visual arts and in literature, there has been a swing away from the optimistic belief in progress and the perfectability of the world, to a sober recognition of the tenuous nature of our existence. Consequently, in both art and literature, there has been a progressive preoccupation with apocalyptic and prophetic themes, though often without the hopeful expectation of a redemtive age. It is in this ethos that my work has developed.

The literary source material for my work was both extensive and diverse. While most of this writing cannot be specifically defined as 'apocalyptic', it nevertheless exhibits a certain sensibility, that is sympathetic to the spirit of ancient apocalyptic.

In assimilating the texts as sources for my work, I have used a process of 'literary collage', not unlike that used in making the prints themselves. William Burroughs employs a method of writing he calls "cut-ups", where selected passages are lifted -'cut-up' - at random, from the original text and re-structured according to personal inclination. By doing this the 'cutter' introduces a new dimension to

the original meaning of the work. Burroughs writes: "Cut-ups often come through as code messages with special meaning for the cutter" (Calder 1982:19). Similarly, my concern with my source material was not necessarily been with the writer's original intention, nor with the meaning of particular images in the context of the whole work, but rather with the appeal these images made to my own imagination and visual sensibility.

Important to the development of my theme, was the study of certain literary texts concerned with the disintegration of Western Civilization, and the resultant collapse into an atavistic savagery. In some books I have looked at, the approach is one of futuristic projection, an imaginary account of the world after doomsday. Others explore the nature of those ambivalent forces within the human psyche, expressed as a metaphorical journey into the heart of the wilderness. In many of the books, it is implied that so-called 'civilization', with its ways of conquest and plunder, is only a thin veneer that barely conceals a truly barbaric heart.

The author I have been most influenced by is Russell Hoban. His book Riddley Walker (1980), my most important source not only for imagery, but also for the development of my theme, is set in the wake of obliteration by a nuclear war. Utilizing a "broken down vernacular" of his own invention, Russell Hoban presents a tale that is rich in fables and myth, all conjured up from the relics of this age. Located in Britain, in a distant future, a ravaged and broken land is left to reconstitute itself. Language and knowledge of the past age have been forgotten, and existence reverts to a grasping barbarism; even the secret of making fire has to be rediscovered. The landscape presented is one of mud and rain and burning, smoking ruins and dead towns. Dogs, the keepers of the secrets of the old world, roam in packs, both feared and revered by a superstitious tribal community. The key to the past is contained in a story called, "The Eusa Story", a kind of bible that Hoban devises from the fifteenth-century wall painting, "The Legend of Saint Eustace" (Canterbury Cathedral), which recounts the history of "time back way back", and how "Bad Time" came about:

> Thay dogs howlt & a win cum up. Thay ded leavs wirlt & rattelin lyk ded birds flyin. Thay grayt dogs stud on thear hyn legs & talkin lyk men agen. Thay sed, Eusa aul thay menne leavs as rattelt thats how menne peapl yu wil kil. Then thay dogs begun tu tel uv tym tu cum. Thay sed, The lan wil dy & thay peapl wil eat 1 a nuther. The water wil be poysen & the peapl wil drink blud (ibid: 31).

Similarly, in William Golding's Lord of the Flies (1963) (the title is a translation of the Arabic, 'Baal-Zebub', and

describes one of the manifestations of the devil) there is an atomic explosion. Their innocent secure world stripped away, a band of young survivors is plunged into a fearful reality, where the imaginary "beastie" becomes the manifestation of hidden aspects of their own nature. The recognition of this reality is best illustrated by this sentence:

> ...Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of a true wise friend callled Piggy (ibid: 248).

In much of my literary source material, the symbolic treatment of the landscape is parallel to the descent into barbarism. The image of the devastated landscape - the atmosphere of destruction often found in apocalyptic - has been an important influence on my work. In many instances, the landscape serves as a metaphor for human experience, echoing the horror and desolation of an introspective life.

In Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness (1973) and J. M. Coetzee's Waiting for the Barbarians (1980), the theme of conflict is explored in a frontier settlement in terms of the "encounter between colonizer and colonized"(Dovey 1988:208). This confrontation is often portrayed as one between the rational and the chaotic Both books illustrate the irony of the aspirations of colonialism, and its use of barbaric means in order to convert that which is considered primitive. In Heart of Darkness, Marlowe's journey up the river into the "savage" heart of the jungle to find Kurtz, serves as an analogy for a journey towards that "impenetrable darkness" which lies locked within the human soul.

> I tried to break the spell - the heavy, mute spell of the wilderness - that seemed to draw him to its pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions. This alone, I was convinced, had driven him out to the edge of the forest, to the bush, towards the gleam of fires, the throb of drums, the drone of wierd incantations; this alone had beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations...
>
> ...But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad (ibid: 95).

Waiting for the Barbarians moves through a monochromatic landscape of varied terrain; a desolation of grey wastes shifting from icy marshland, salty deserts, sand-flats, and duneland, to plains of "whirling sand and

snow and dust" (p.67). Here again, landscape features strongly as a metaphoric parallel to the journey inwards. As much as the black entanglement of the jungle corresponds to "the horror" glimpsed by Kurtz within his own dark soul, so the barren empty wasteland of the frontier reflects the Magistrate's own insubstantial existence. It is a bleak world, made all the more powerful by its anonymity. This book presents no landmarks nor specific details to persuade the reader of its local pertinence. This choice of a nameless, timeless, metaphorical landscape has been a strong influence for the portrayal of landscape in my own prints.

The historical guilt associated with colonization, the genocide of native peoples, and the continuing destruction of ecologically balanced regions are issues which have also been raised in many films. Some examples of those that have been influential for my work are: Werner Herzog's Fitzcarraldo and Where The Green Ants Dream, and Francis Ford Coppola's Apocalypse Now, which was inspired by Conrad's Heart of Darkness. In Apocalypse Now, imperialist attitudes towards the colonized are mirrored in the treatment of the landscape where technological destroyers such as Napalm and Agent Orange are used for conquest. Similarly, in Where The Green Ants Dream, land considered sacred by the Aborigines is plundered by prospectors in the process of mining for uranium. In Fitzcarraldo, ecologically balanced areas of the Amazon are undermined by the exploitation of its trees for rubber. This destruction of the landscape, is wreaked with arrogant disregard for the original inhabitants. Werner Herzog says of his film making:

> You have to dig with a shovel like an archeologist and look and see if anything's left to be found amidst the defamed landscape. I see so very few people in the world who would take such risks to do something about the dire situation in which we find ourselves. If need be, we even have to go into the thick of battle or wherever else it is necessary to go (Wenders 1985: 35).

Another important source for my imagery was provided by the poetry I read. As with literature and cinema, but especially when reading poetry, my response was directed to those thoughts or images contained in the text which informed my own. Rather than interpreting the poem, it was the evocative qualities or visual associations of particular images which were extracted.

The scope of the poetry read during my study was wide and varied, and included among others, the work of T.S. Eliot, Pablo Neruda, Wallace Stevens and Ted Hughes. In many instances, the attitudes of the poets towards their own writing, have been important as a means of clarifying

my own. For example, in The Snow Man, Stevens' portrayal of the landscape as desolate, remote and anonymous, speaks of his encounter with a world devoid of meaning. Fragments of much of T. S. Eliot's poetry, such as:

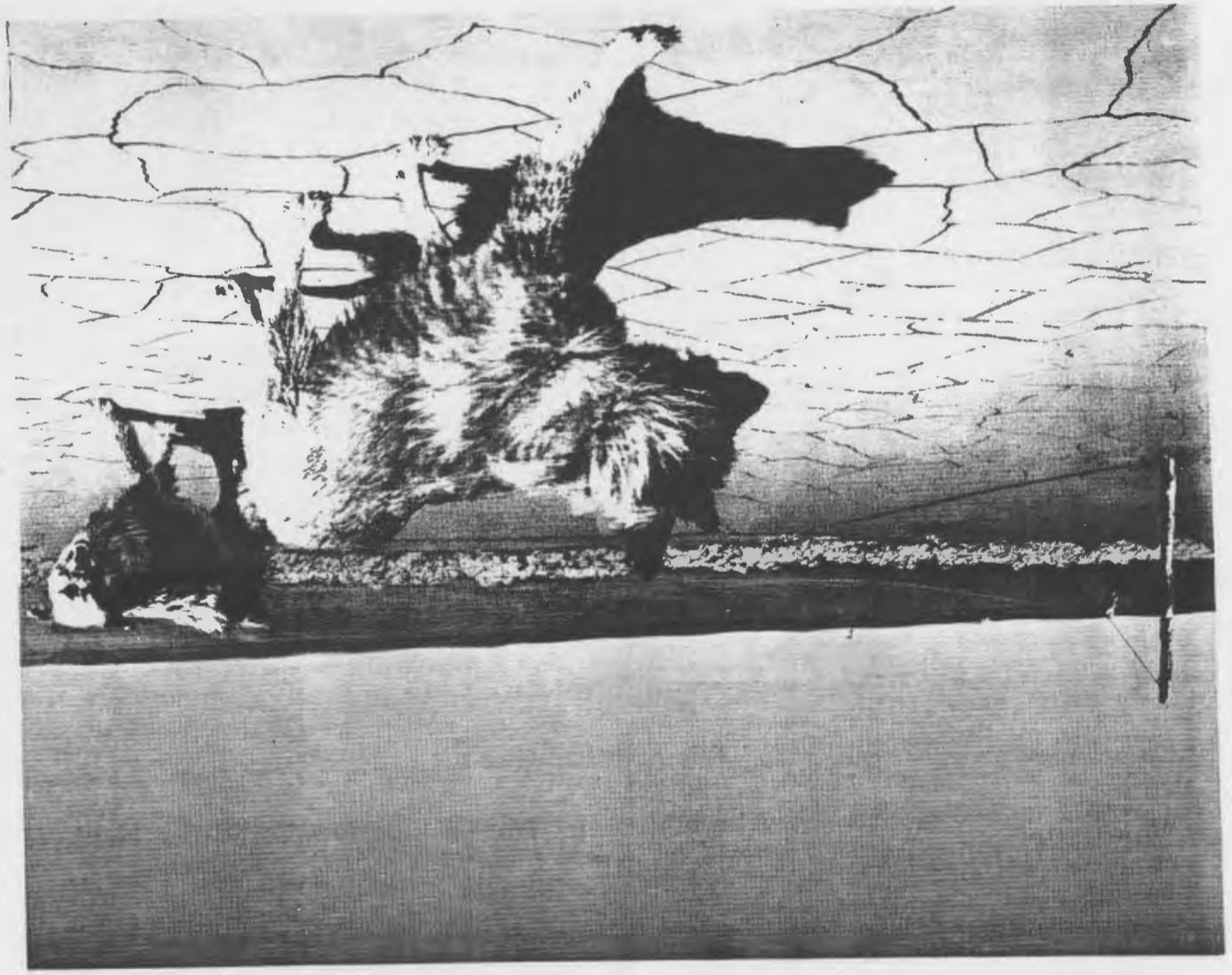
> In this valley of dying stars
> In this hollow valley
> This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms,

from The Hollow Men, suggested a mood for many of the landscapes I used in my prints. Ted Hughes' metaphorical use of animals in many of his poems contributed to the development of the role played by the dogs in my prints. His attitude towards the subjects of his poems are described thus:

> What excites my imagination is the war between vitality and death, and my poems may be said to celebrate the exploits of the warriors of either side (Hughes in Summerfield 1974: 126.).

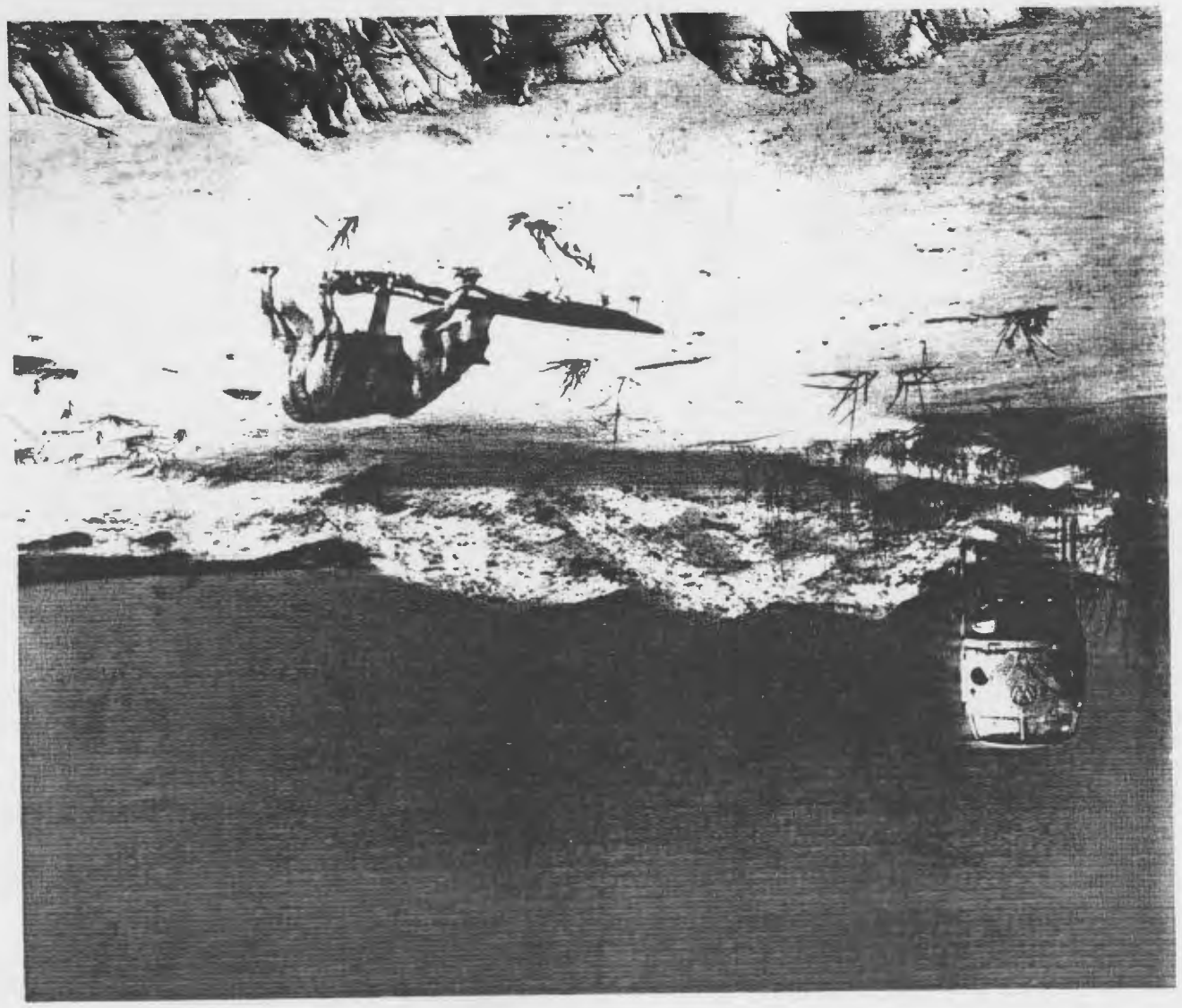
What is that sound high in the air
murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only.

T. S. Eliot: The Wasteland



We hadnt seen no dogs yet that morning nor we dint see none on the hy groun sholder. No dogs but it wer then in the soun of the rain I begun to see them yeller eyes agen. They begun to be there for me in the greyness. It wernt nothing to think on it wer jus the yellerness of them and the black of the dog in the soun of the grey rain falling.

Russell Hoban: Riddley Walker p.68



MY WORKING METHODS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

One of my central interests, with regard to my own photographs, was the nature of 'photographic reality', and the contrasts between appearance and reality. A trademark of photography is its bent for mimicking the real world. When looking at the subjects of photographs we assume that they exist in reality. Consequently, it could be said that photographs are bound by appearances, that they cannot invent their subjects. This is not to say that photographs fail to go beyond the surface of things, but appearances can be and often are, misleading. The mistaken popular belief in the objectivity of the photograph that leads to the idea that photographs present reality. The subjects the photographer selects, and chooses to preserve, show only one aspect of reality, transcribed into a fixed, time-bound, representation of that particular scene or event.

While it was important for me to work in a photographically realistic way, I found the inability of my photography to go beyond appearance or escape its historical moment limiting. The associations that I had made between objects, which were important in the expression of my response to something, were often not apparent in my photographs.

Consequently, while retaining the visual verisimilitude of the photograph, I chose to work in related printmaking media where I was able to manipulate photographic reality by collaging elements from a number of different sources. By recontextualizing and recreating certain images, I was able to explore the ways in which meaning shifted with changes in context, and reveal new associations. In this way, I was still able to present photographic 'reality' as we expect to see it, but one that we can no longer assume to be reality. In my prints, the images created are a kind of fiction, a distortion of the 'real world', as reflected by the camera, but one that is closer to my own perception of reality.

My graphic techniques and working methods have been largely governed by the need to create images in which the veracity of my photographic references was retained, while at the same time investing them with meanings distinct from the source material. This meant that the prints should retain a high degree of photographic detail, showing little trace of any autographic processes.

My choice of techniques was initially determined by the need to establish a process that most effectively reproduced my photographs. This involved translating the original photographs from continuous-tone negatives into half-tone positives, and establishing a suitable print medium for the reproduction of the collaged images. Throughout my study, I worked with a variety of orthochromatic lith and scanner films and developers, and a wide range of half-tone screens, both commercially and

hand-made. After conducting research into a variety of printing processes including photo-etching, screenprinting and off-set lithography, I decided on a combination of off-set lithography and screenprinting.

As all the source material for the the prints was provided by my own photographs, it was important, initially, to establish a reservoir of visual material from which to draw. My first few months of study were spent gathering as much photographic source material as possible. I went on many field-trips in southern Africa, later concentrating on the arid landscape that characterizes much of the West Coast. At first I photographed anything of interest, selecting particular structures and objects that appealed to my visual sensibility, as well as looking at landscape as a 'stage' in which various elements could be placed. Later, as the work progressed and the content of my images demanded particular subject matter, I would photograph specifically for a series or print. For example; I photographed dog training classes in order to portray the dogs running in print 8, the dog in print 9 and 10, and the falling dog in print 12. Print 8 introduced a shift in location from empty wasteland to junkyard, further developed in prints 11 and 12. For this material, I photographed various junkyards around Cape Town. For the material of the final three prints, I photographed stadiums and waste dumps.

In the making of the transparencies, it was necessary to find a half-tone screen most suited to the translation of my images. I wanted a screen that did not look mechanical, one that had a grain structure similar to that of a photograph. Mechanical dot screens were not viable because of the regular, visible dot structure and also because of the 'morey' pattern created during the collaging process. Initially, I worked with a commercial mezzotint screen and a sheet of acetate with a pitted texture, both of which I abandoned in favour of a sheet of sandblasted glass, which has an extremely fine, random grain structure, and simulates photographic grain more closely than the other screens with which I experimented.

With the idea for a print in mind, I made rough sketches and collages of photostats of my photographs. The collaging process, involving the physical arrangement of elements that formed an image, was informed not only by particular subject matter, but included associations and ideas absorbed from my immediate environment. Influenced by reading material, associations made with particular places, and experiences while photographing, these largely intuitive notions later contributed to the development of my theme. For example, the central pack of dogs in print 7 was photographed outside a resettlement camp near Port Nolloth. It was only a year later, however, when I photographed the burnt out petrol truck and placed it within a Karoo landscape, that I found

an appropriate context for them. In placing the dogs within this context, it was my intention to contrast their vitality with the barrenness of their environment, while at the same time emphasizing a sense of futility and impotence.

The film I used for my photgraphs was Kodak Tri-X which was developed in Kodak HC110 developer. The quality of negative I found to be most suited to half-tone reproduction was one with a high degree of contrast. As a result most of my film was over-developed by one stop. When printing the body of photographs however, it was important that a rich, subtle tonal quality was retained in the range of greys. In order to achieve this, all the photographs were printed on a diffusion head enlarger. The paper used was a fibre base, Ilford Gallerie, which was developed in Ilford PQ Universal developer. Once printed, all the photographs were toned with Kodak Selenium toner, in order to enrich the blacks and protect the surfaces.

In the darkroom, I made a number of film-positives of the same negatives, enlarging them to various sizes. This widened my choices when composing an image, and allowed for the use of repetition, for example, the pack of dogs running in print 8, and the structures on the horizon in print 5. With the smaller prints, I generally worked with one landscape image. For example, print 4 finds its source in photograph 3, in reverse. In print 1, the original photograph was altered by scraping away any extraneous information, such as removing vegetation, and changing the shape of the horizon by deleting houses and sand dunes. Other changes were made to the original photographs by the the juxtaposition of incongruous elements, as well as the ambiguous use of light, scale and spatial relationships. For example, in print 6, the depiction of the dog in black and white, close to the picture plane distinguishes it from the rest of the landscape. In print 10, both the scale, and the location of the dogs in relation to each other distorts the distance between the tents and the dog in the foreground. In print 15, I have used three different light sources in order to provoke a feeling of unease. Light is cast from the left on to the landscape, from the right on to the barrels and shines directly on to the dogs, as though they were under a spotlight. Similarly, in print 14, the nature of the contrast between the starkly lit landscape against the dark sky heightens the sense of expectancy in the mood of the print.

In the series of larger prints, limitations such as a loss of detail with the degree of enlargement, as well as the lack of facilities availible for working on that scale, made the use of one landscape image more difficult. As a result, the landscapes in the last six prints are entirely fictitious, and consist of a number of different sources. For example, in prints 13 and 15, the landscape was structured around the

central element of the dogs. In print 13, the tyres on the left, and the shadows of the dogs, made it possible to construct the surrounding landscape from four different sources. For the final three prints however, I avoided this by photographing the landscape in a panoramic view. In print 15, the source of the waste dump comes from three such photographs: 22, 23 and 24. Here obvious divisions were disguised by the careful addition of autographic detail.

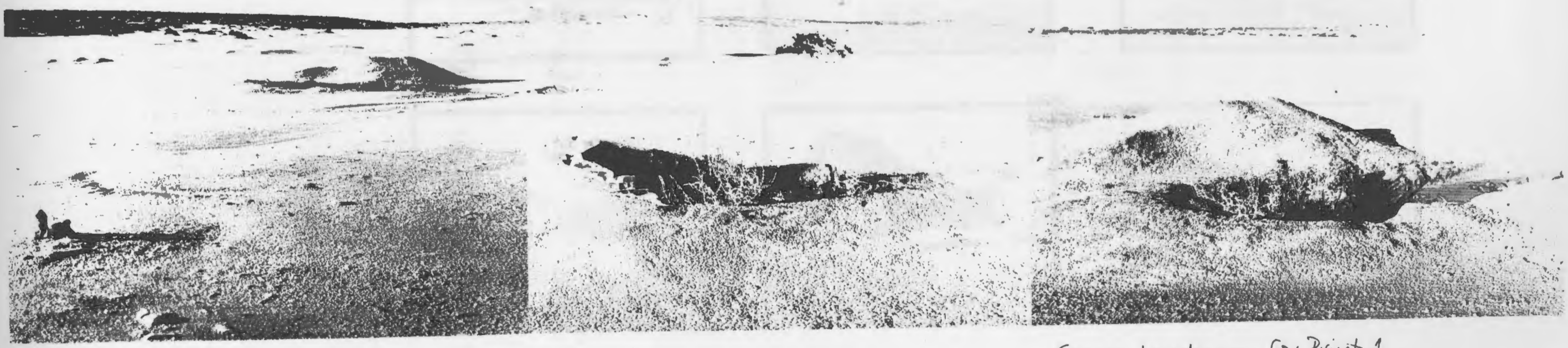
When each print was composed to my satisfaction, the collaged positives were contacted to make a negative, and contacted again for the final positive. Film edges were then retouched, and detail lost through the process was added by airbrushing on to the final positive, for example, in prints 5, 8 and 10. Unlike most standard lith films, with which I worked for most of the smaller prints, one of the advantages of 'scanner' film was its excellent dot etching properties. This meant that highlights and a heightened contrast could be achieved by etching into the film. This, together with its sensitivity to light, made it no longer necessary to airbrush the final positives. Owing to the size of the larger prints, it was impossible for me to contain the final composition on one sheet of line film. Consequently, these had to be exposed onto the plates in collage form. As a result, it was difficult to delete cutting edges without also destroying the surrounding areas of fine tone. In order to avoid this as much as possible, each piece of film was carefully bevelled before it was exposed on to a photographically sensitized aluminium plate.

The print medium I worked with also had to retain the greatest possible resolution of detail. After working with etching and screenprinting, I found that off-set lithography best reproduced the fine detail of the original transparency. In the print at this stage, however, the richness and subtlety of tones found in photographs was often lacking. Later, for example, in prints 7, 9 and 10, I mixed the black lithographic ink with a raw umber, in order to create a 'duotone' effect. In order to add a tonal richness to the prints, and to create a particular mood or atmosphere, I used a trichromatic range of transparent inks to screenprint layers of graded, colour over the lithographs. This process of screenprinting was a reduction process where selected areas of the print were blocked out with a water-based screen filler, as the layers of colour were built up.

The atmosphere of many of the prints was largely determined by the quality of light created by the use of colour. In some prints, for example, prints 1 and 6, minimal colour was added in order to retain the characteristics of a stark landscape. In others, such as prints 2 and 4, the build-up of ink consisted of up to seventeen layers, where a subtle, yet dramatic quality of light was achieved. The sense of expectancy and unease,

for example, in prints 10, 14 and 16, was heightened by the dramatic contrasts between the monochromatic landscape, and the use of colour in the sky.

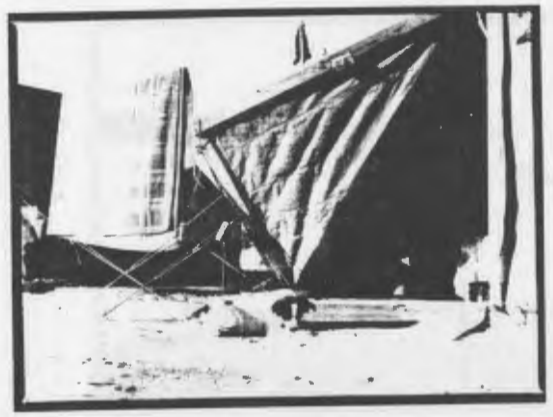
The paper I printed on throughout the portfolio was Fabriano. For the smaller prints, I used Fabriano Artistico, a hot pressed paper, which retained the intensity of the blacks. For the larger prints, this paper was unavailable. The not pressed Rosaspina used for these prints absorbed the black ink to a higher degree. As a result, during the screenprinting process, the transparent base in the ink tended to form a 'skin' on the print, dulling the richness of the blacks and I varnished all my editions to restore lustre to these areas.



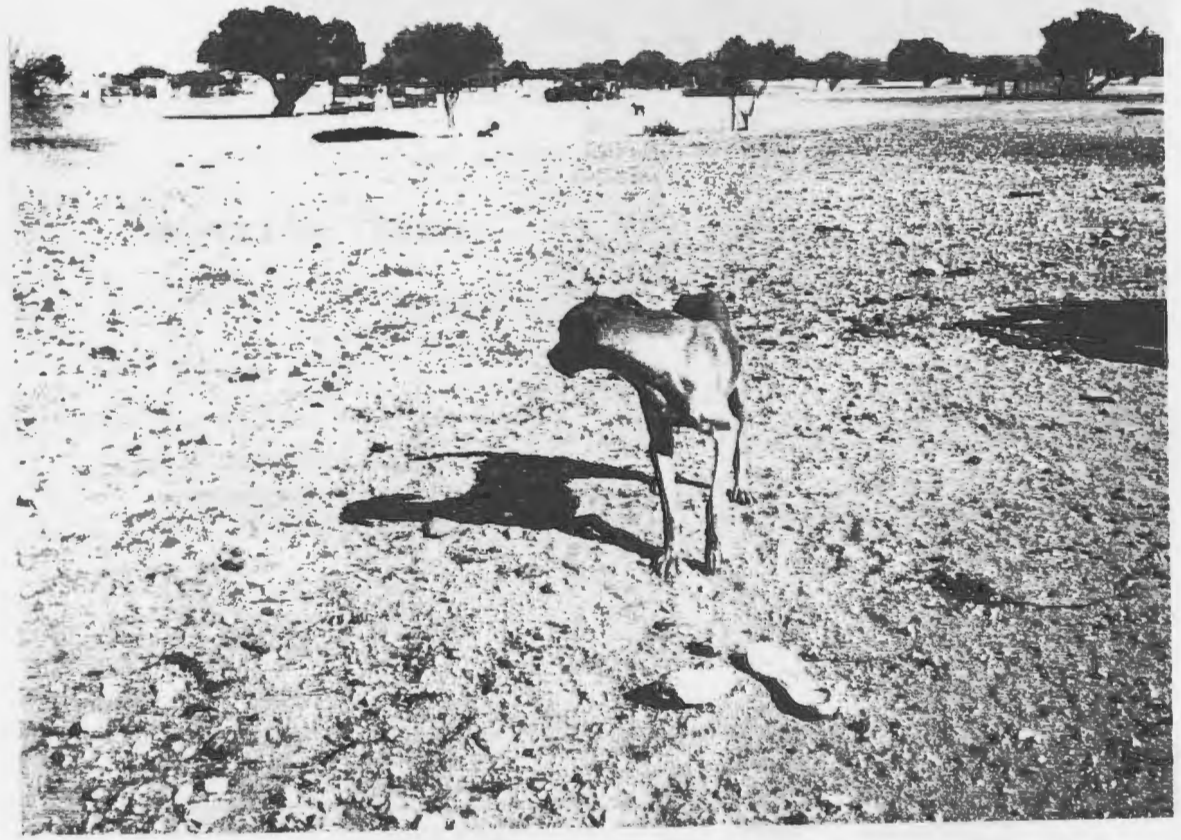
Source landscape for Print 3

Source Landscape for Print 1.

Landscapes: Port Nöllath



Port Nolloth



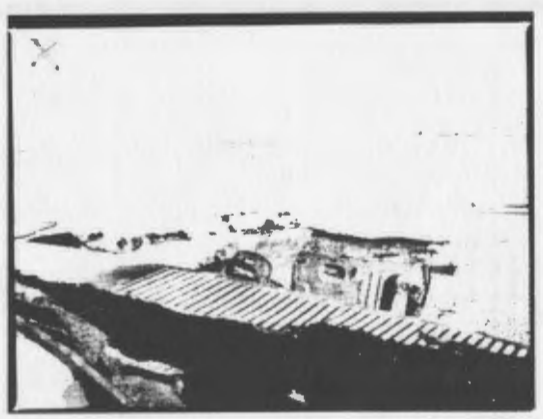
Sources for Print 3.

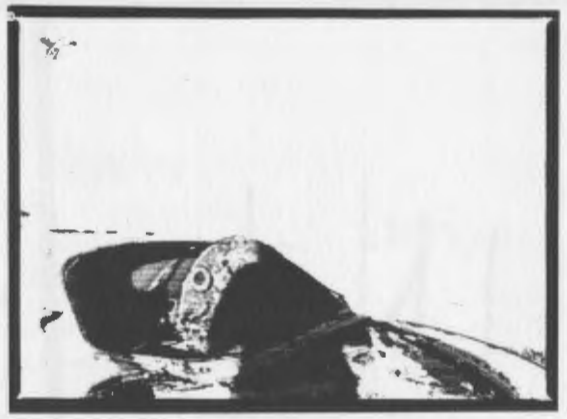
dog - Blouberg Beach.

Sources for Print 6

shelter - Port Nolloth

Landscape - Port Nolloth.



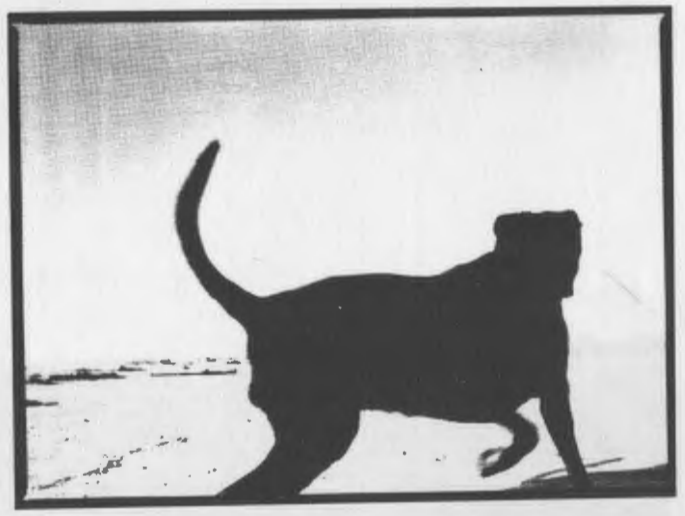


Discarded machinery Port Nolloth.

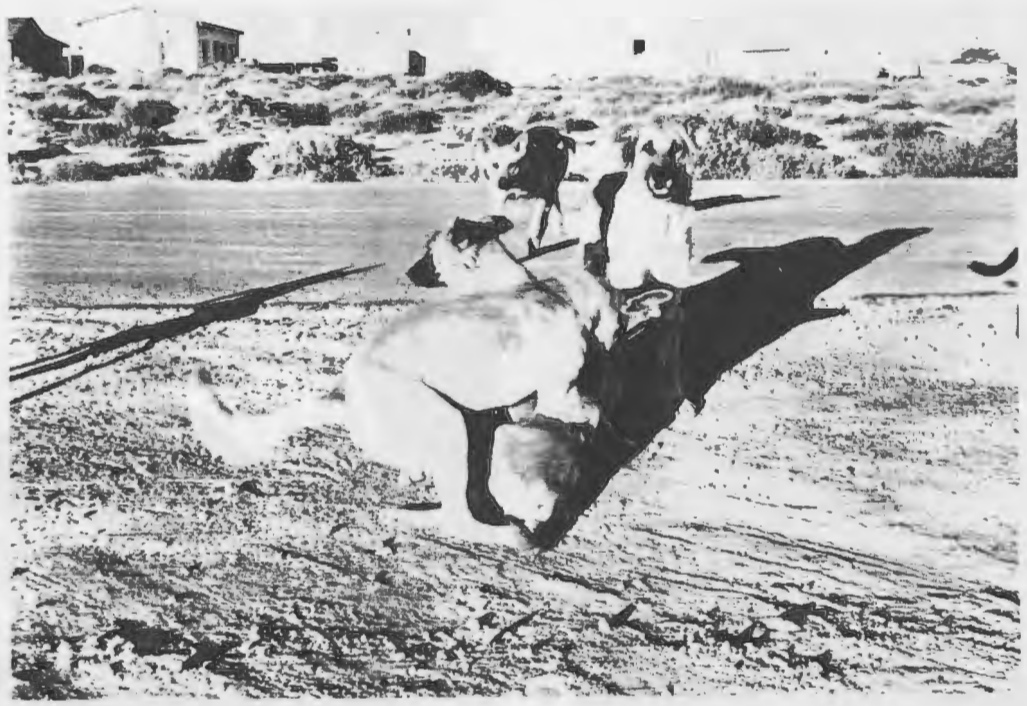
Source landscape, Print 4.

Landscapes from Muizenberg.

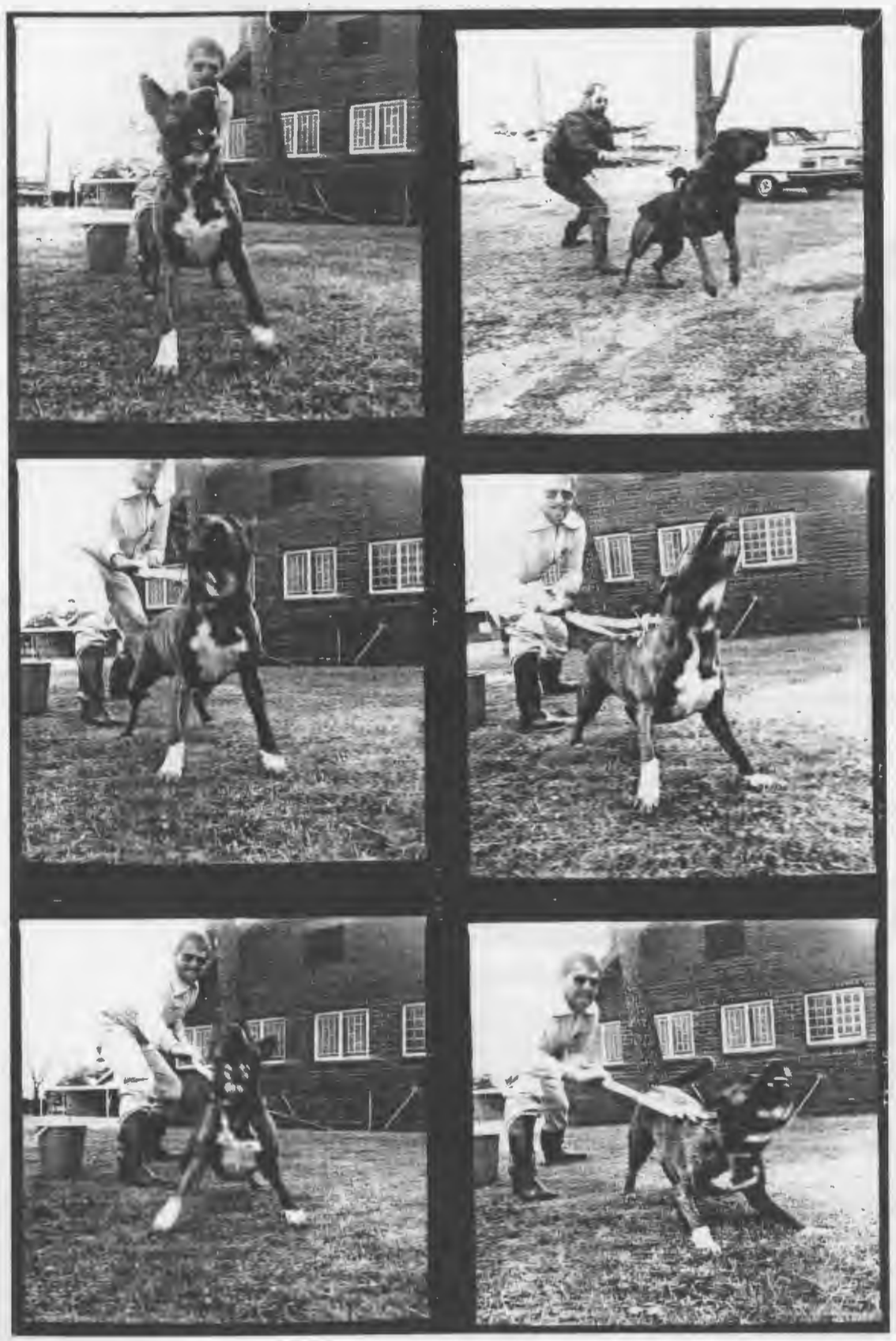
Reference Material - Blouberg Beach



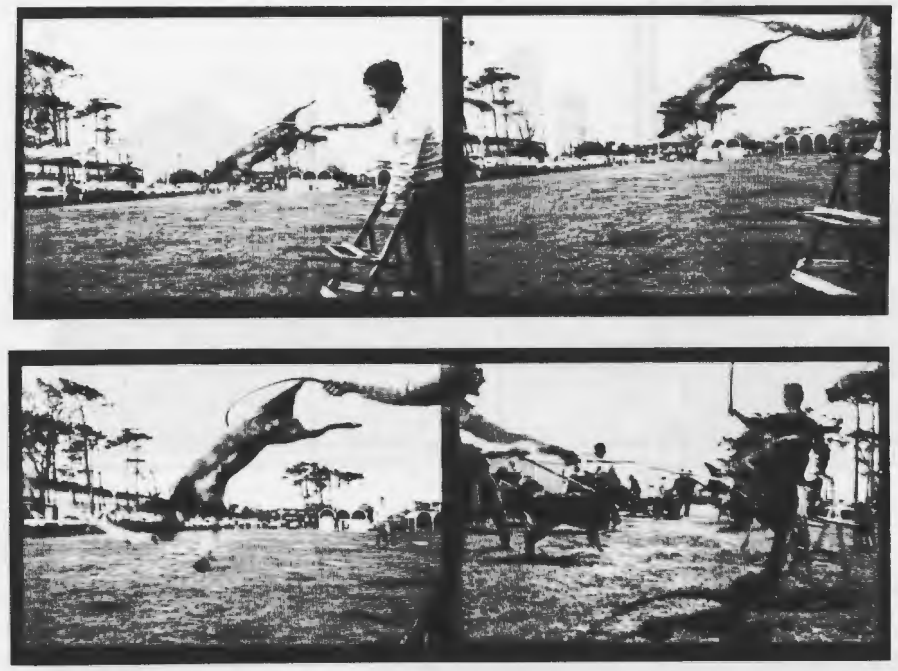
Reference Material - Muizenberg Beach

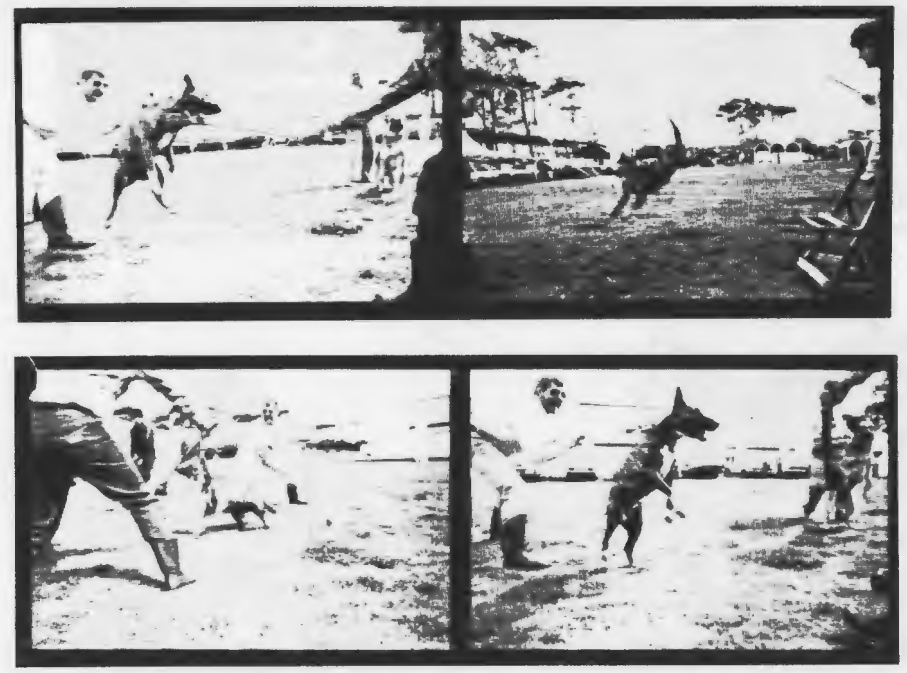


Source for Print 7.

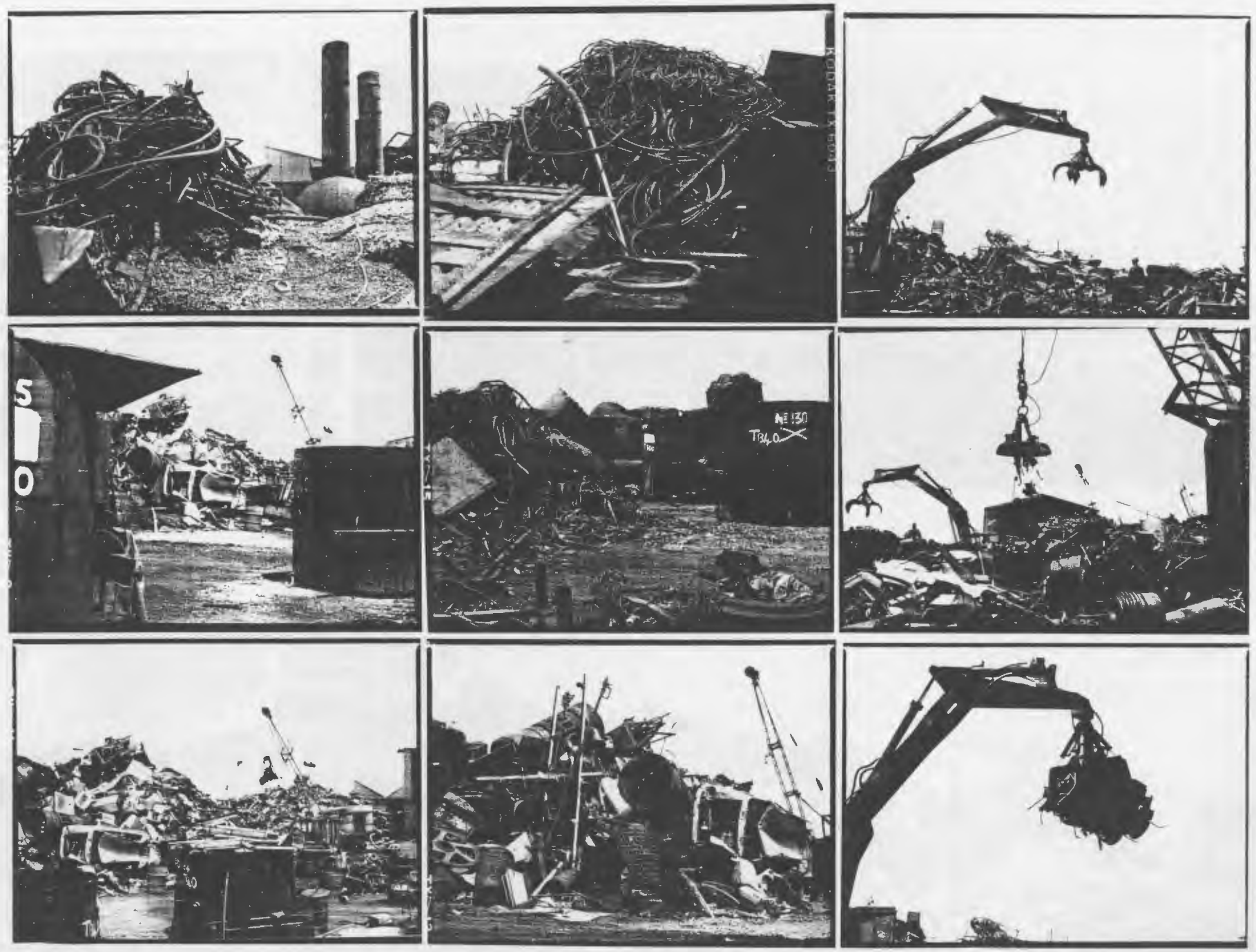


Sources for Print 10.



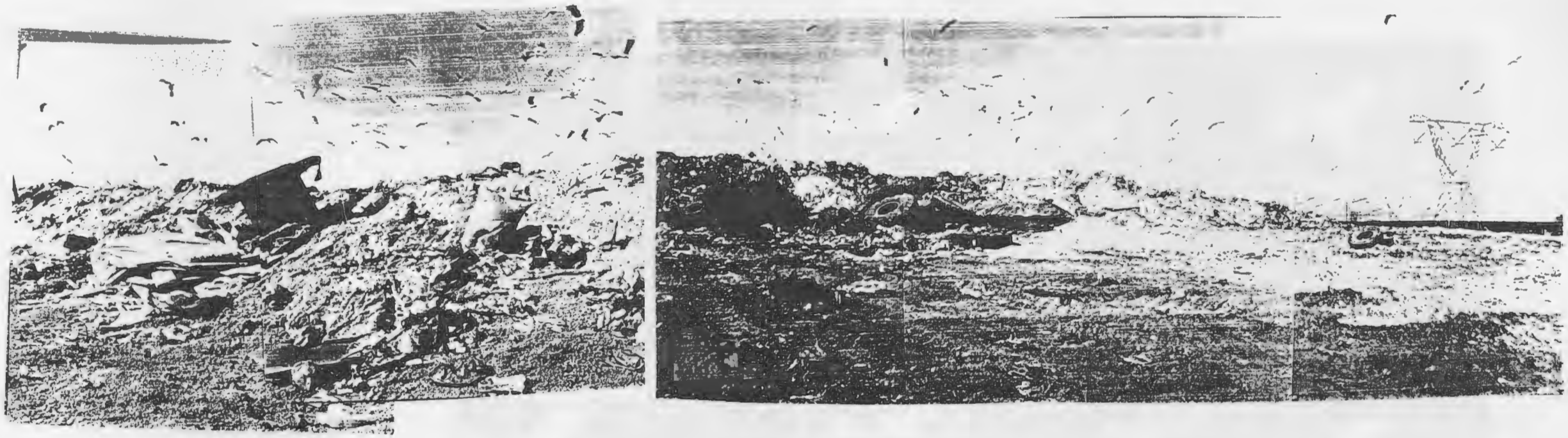


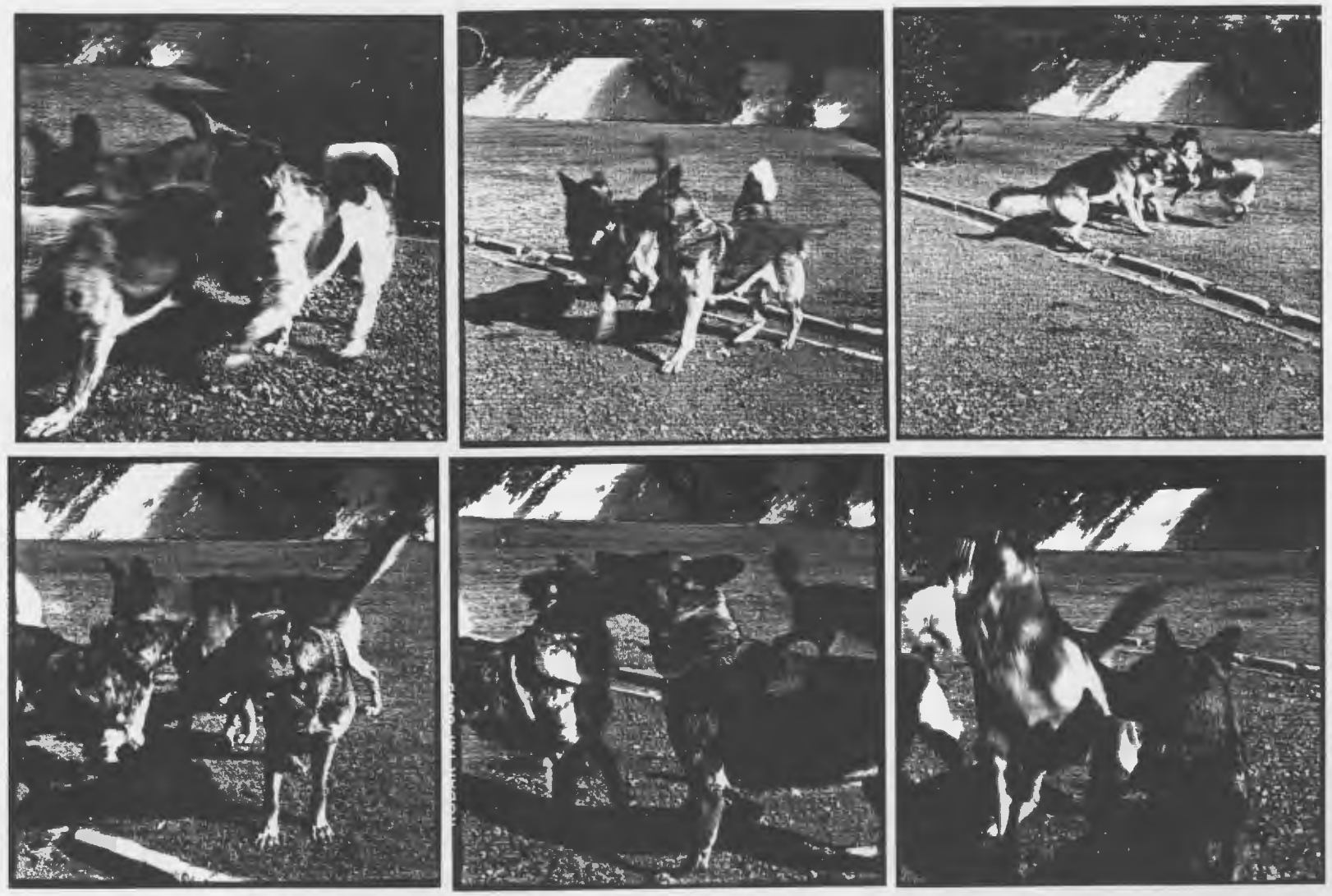
Sources for Print 12.



Source Material for Junkyard Series.

Photostats of Waste Dump panoramas - Material for Series 4 and Series 5.



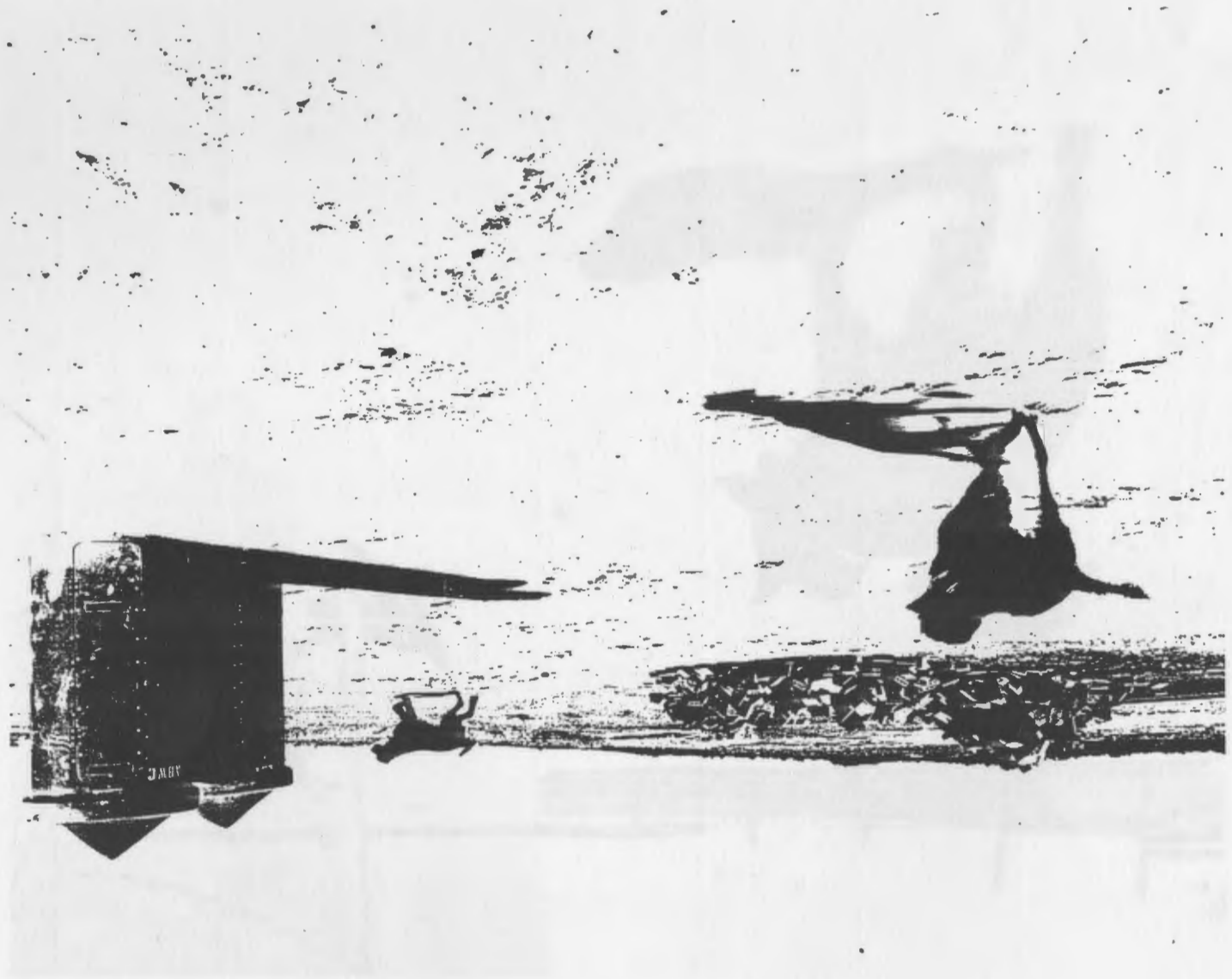


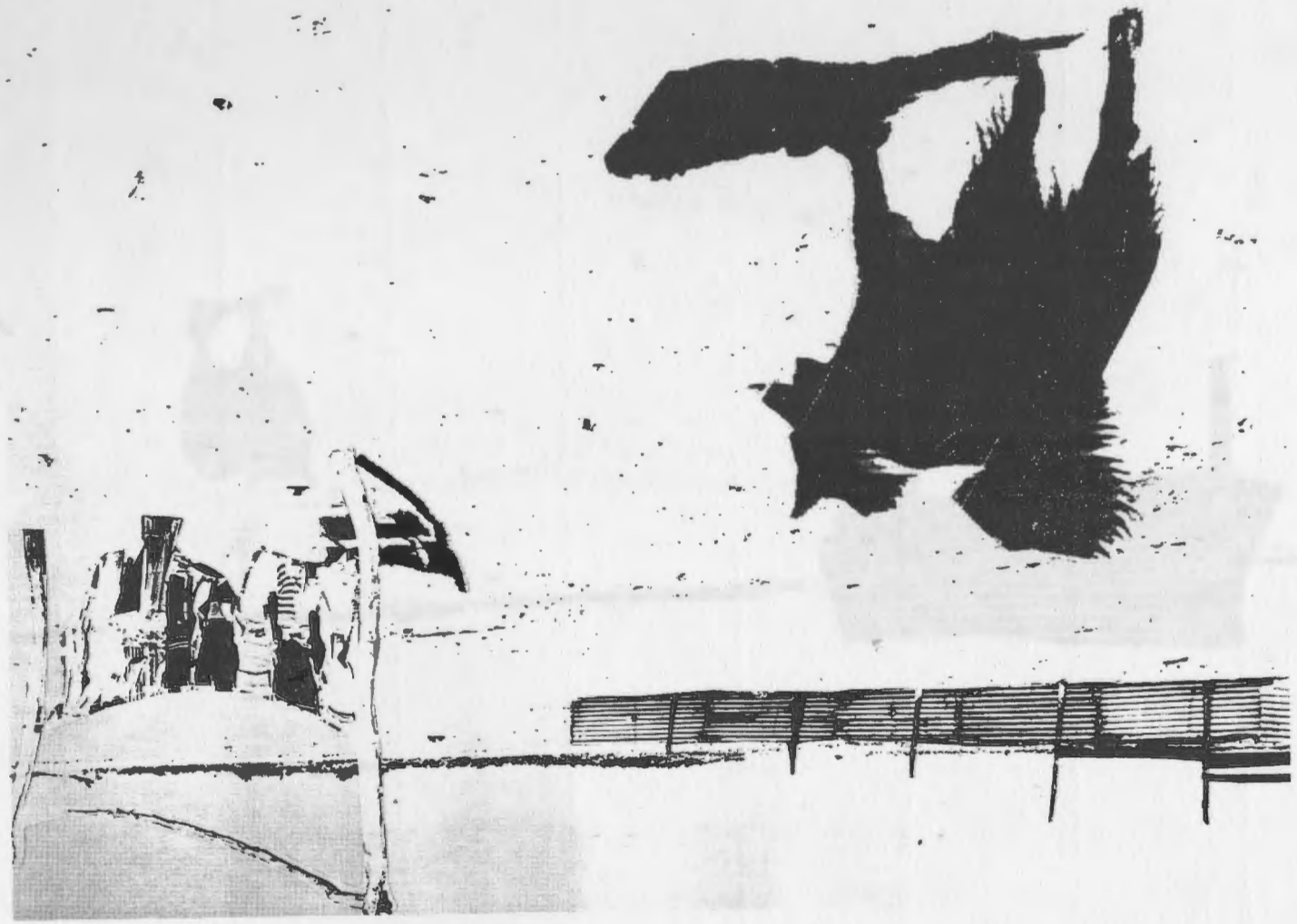
Reference Material for Final Series - Print 15.

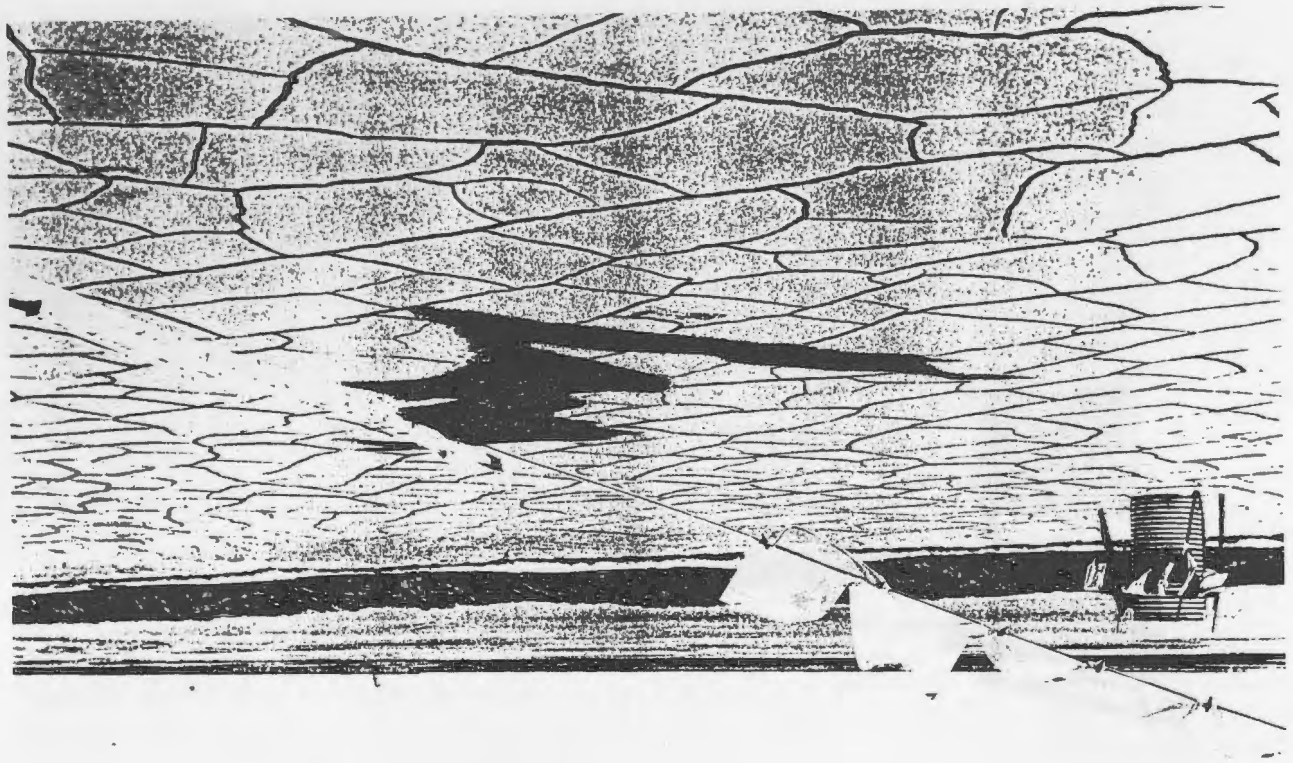
In the impoverishing of the world when the gods disappear man discovers himself, orphaned and dispossessed, a solitary consciousness...

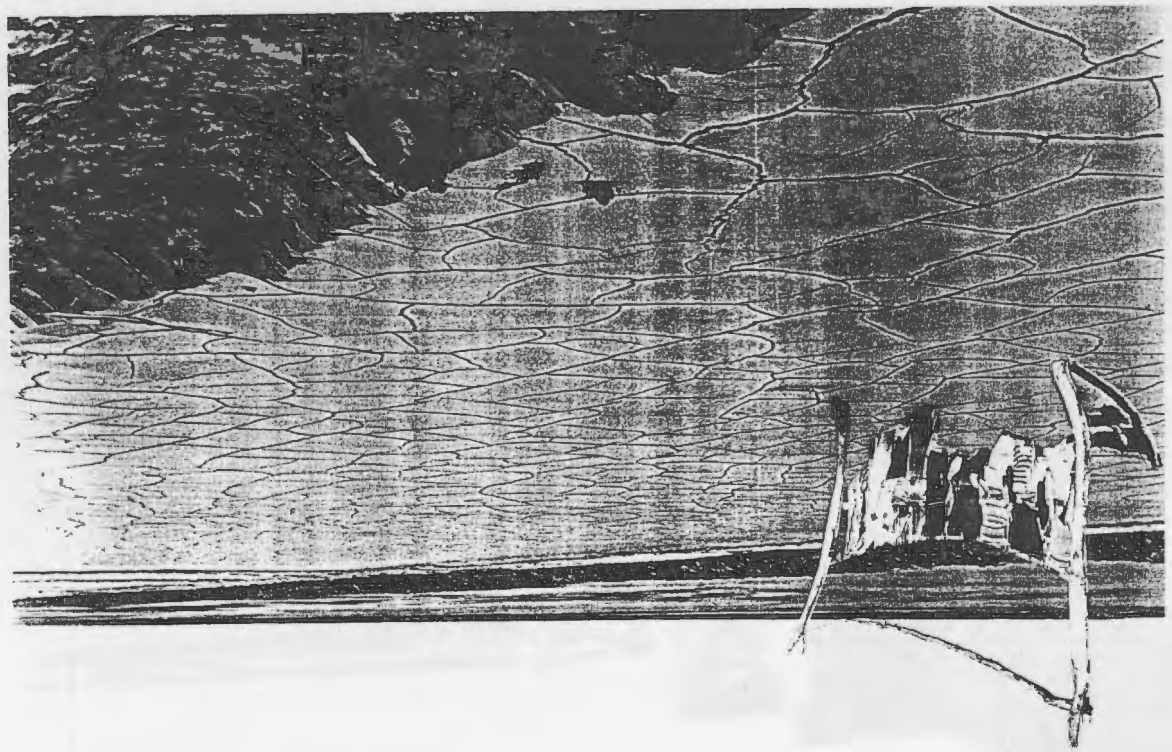
Miller 1965:282 .

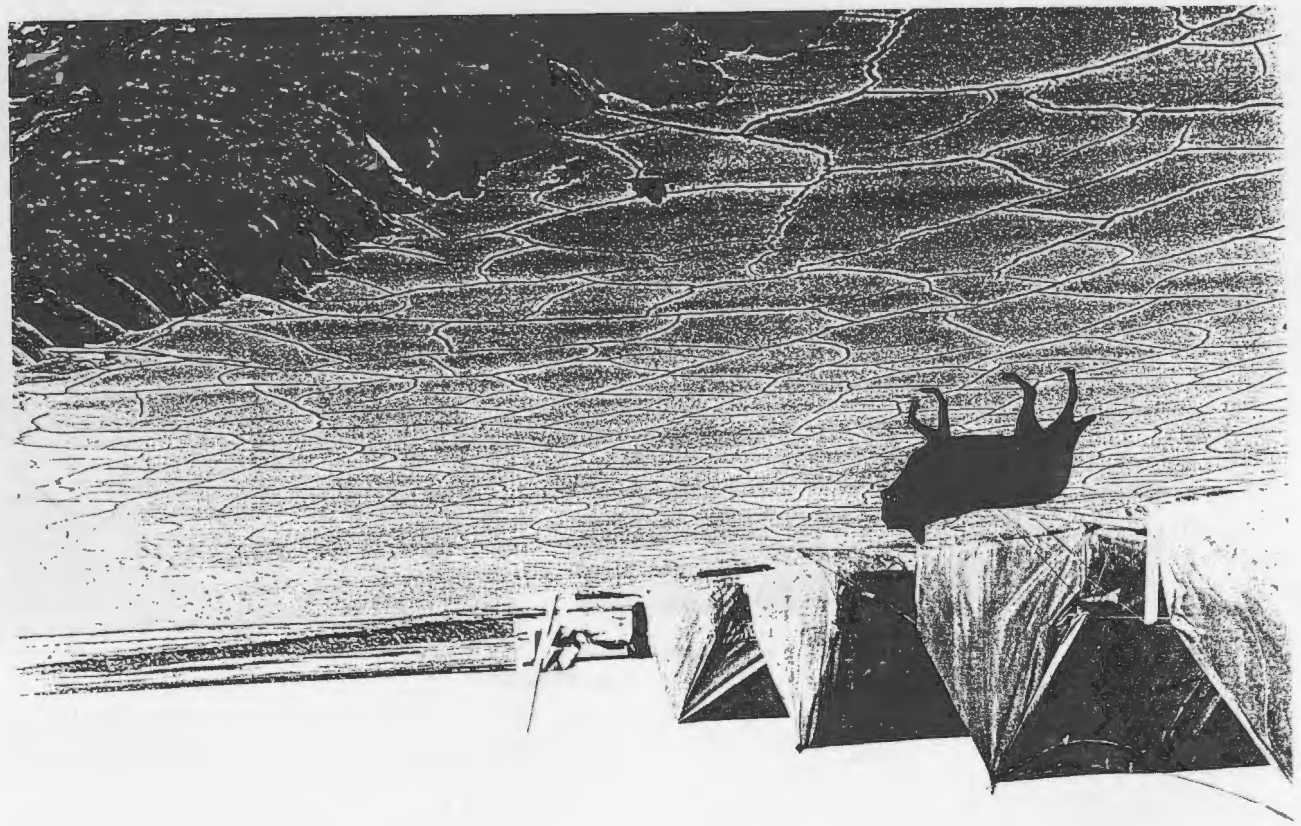
INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK

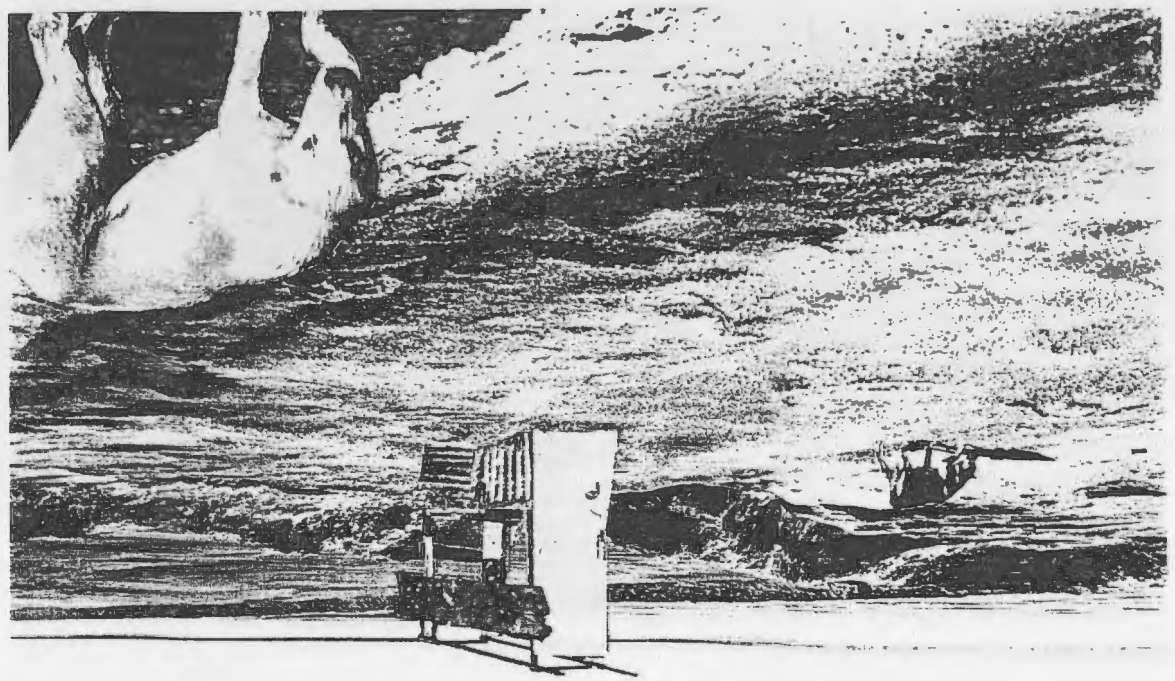


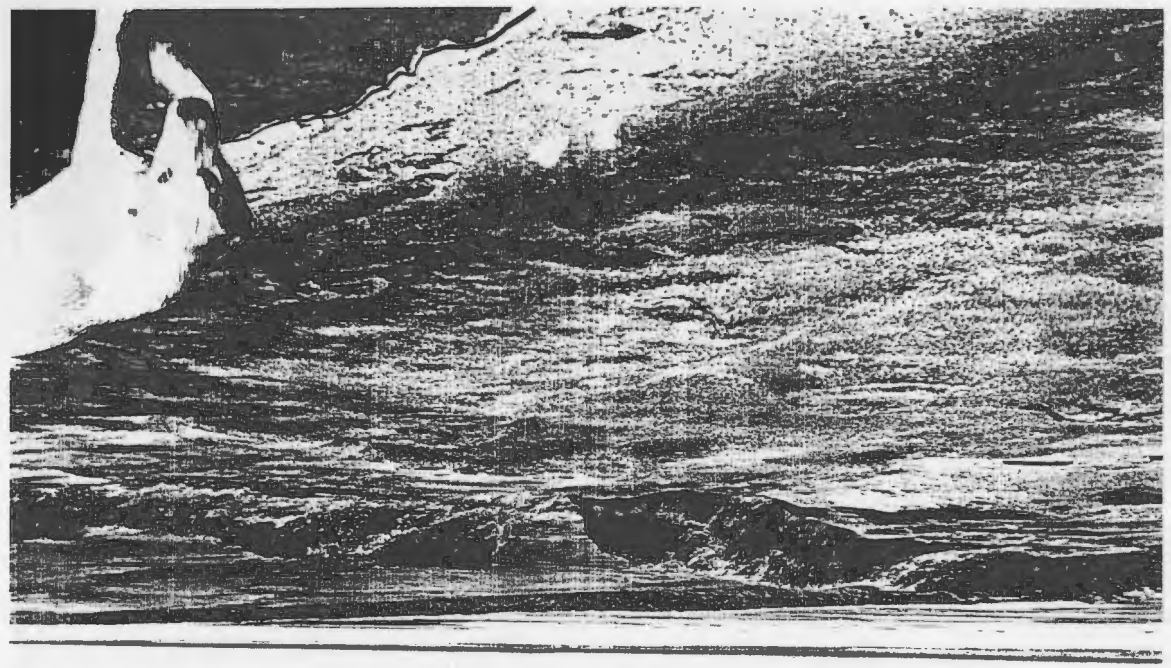


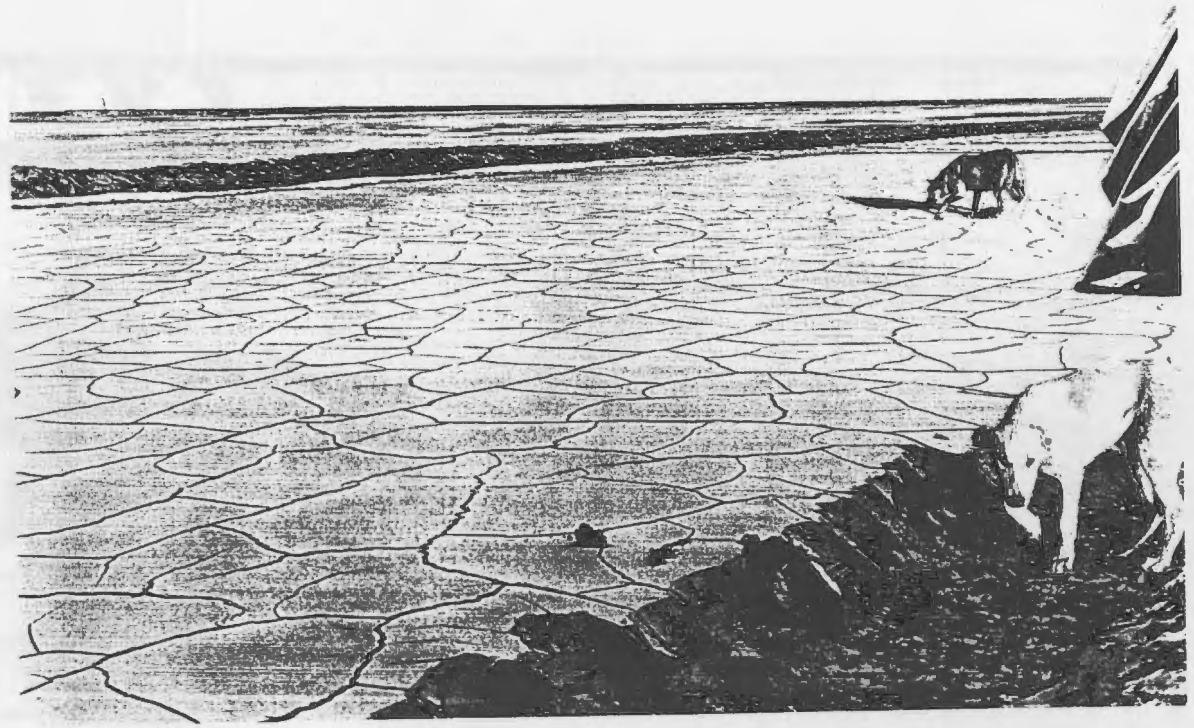


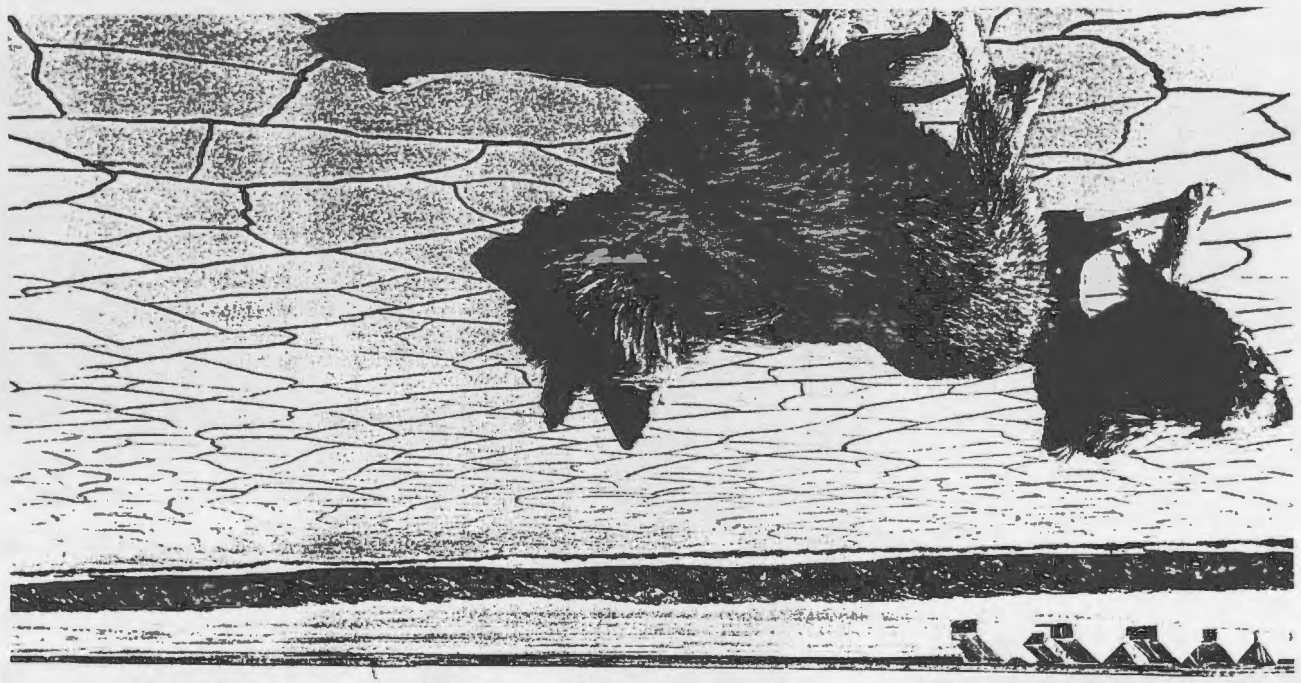


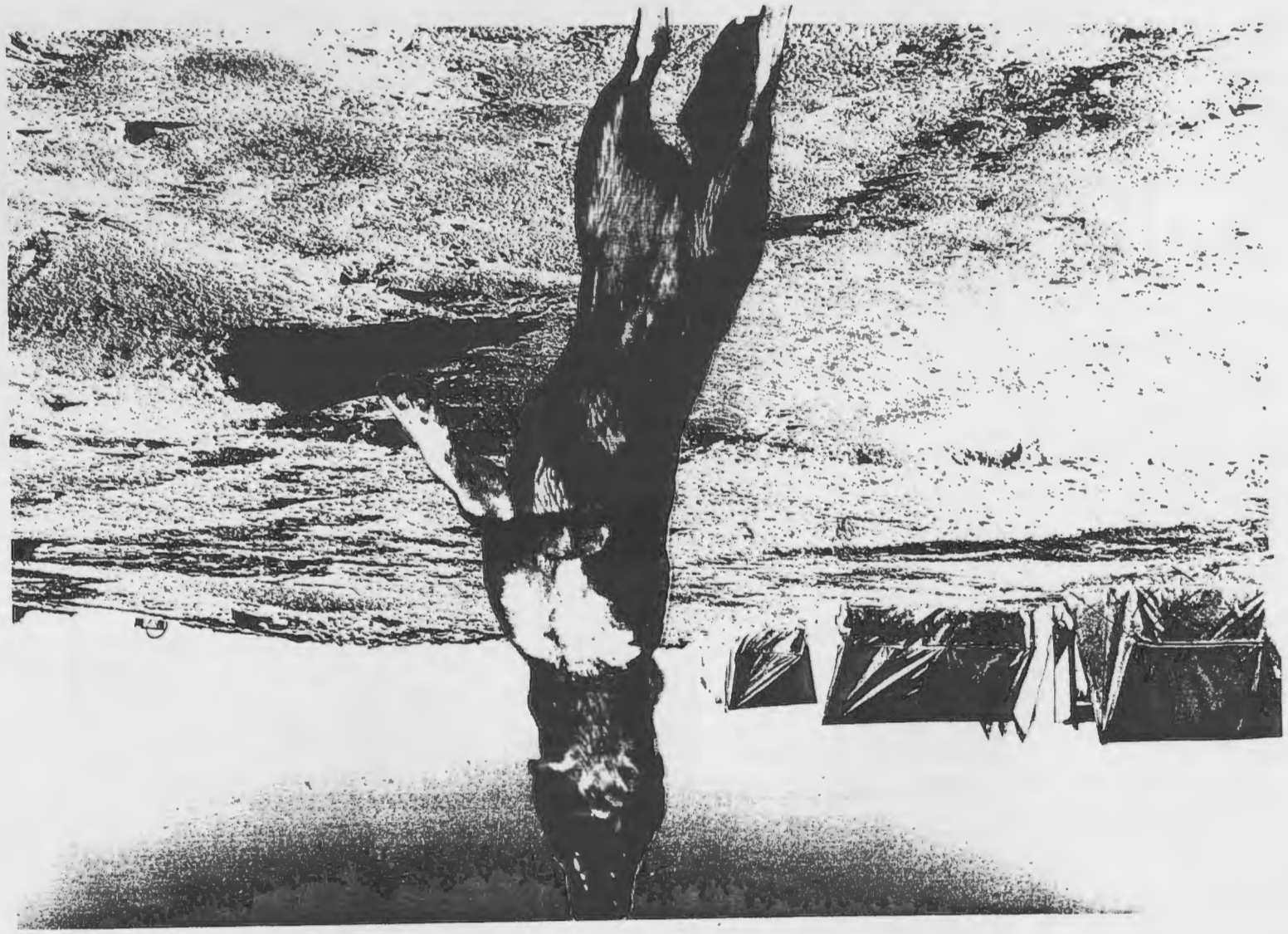












The farm seemed eternal in the crude way the earth does - extending, that is, for a very long time. The farm was as old as the earth, always there, as old as the island, the Platonic form of "farm", of human society itself, a piece of land worked on, lived on, grown over, plowed under, and stitched again, with fingers or with leaves, in and out and into human life's thin weave.

Annie Dillard: Teaching a Stone to talk. p. 133.

a. THE PHOTOGRAPHS

In documenting certain southern African landscapes, it was my intention to focus on aspects of settlement in both urban and rural areas. Through analogy, the photographs presented, attempt to reveal the displacement and dispossession of people resulting from the abuse and violation of natural environments.

The photographs are divided into four series.

The first series contains the rural landscape elements that formed the basis for the landscapes in my early prints. These come from the Transvaal Highveld, the West Coast, the Cape Flats and the Karoo. Each shows some trace of human endeavour, but the arid nature of the original environment is still evident.

The second series of photographs are all located in the West Coast, near Port Nolloth. These are bleak, unproductive landscapes, characterized by impermanent settlements and temporary structures. Some of these represent human attempts to establish a foothold in largely hostile environments, others are the result of resettlement programmes. In each, the unsympathetic terrain and the bleached quality of light reflect the harsh nature of the climate.

The third series of photographs documents the remains of a partially demolished squatter camp outside Cape Town. Waste and debris litter the damp, sandy landscape and provide the raw materials for reconstruction. It was my intention, through these photographs, to reveal the quality of human tenacity, and at the same time to emphasize the results of uprootal and displacement.

The last series of photographs present a continuous view of a rubbish dump on the outskirts of Cape Town, and contain the urban landscape elements that were the basis for the later prints. The reference to Table Mountain was intended as a contrast to the endless landscape of waste which itself symbolizes attitudes of disregard and neglect.

"That dog. I wunnert what the name of him myt be. I knowit he dint have no name the other dogs callit him by nor I wunt try to put no name to him no moren Iwd take it on me to name the litening or the sea. I thot his name myt be a fraction of the nite or the numbers of the black wind or the hisper of the rain. A name you myt play on the boans or reckon up in scratches on a stone."

Russell Hoban: Riddley Walker p.81

b. THE PRINTS

The manifold qualities associated with canine behaviour were instrumental in my choice of the dog as the protagonist in my work. Traits such as loyalty, trust, faithfulness, obedience and aggressive protectiveness, as well as unpredictable ferocity, contributed to my decision to use this animal as a symbol of human conduct. In each print the landscape in which the dogs are placed acts as an important contextualizing feature. It is therefore central to an understanding of the prints, to interpret the demeanour of the dogs through the associative elements of their environment.

While visual and symbolic cross-references do occur throughout the body of prints, for the purpose of this discussion I have loosely divided them into five series.

Series 1

This series, consisting of three prints, introduces the body of work. The presentation of an empty landscape and a distant horizon suggest a vast, deep space. The movement of the animals through this anonymous landscape alludes to the passage of time.

Trip to Windhoek

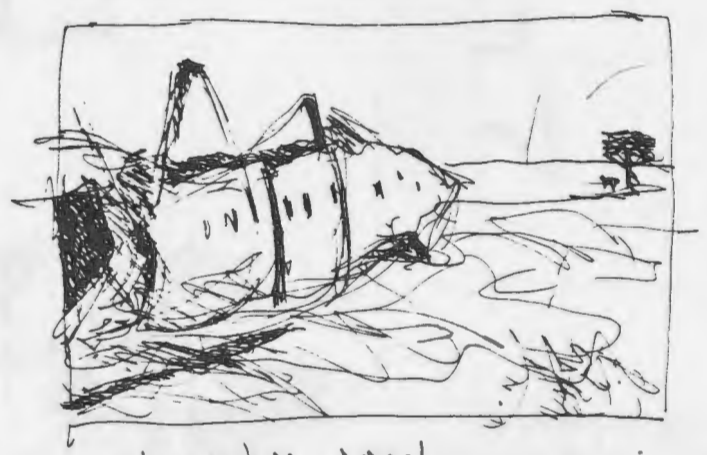
Port Nolloth location -
salt plain, rows of tents -
hot white. strange dug up holes
rubbish holes or maybe graves?
white bones sticking out of the
sand. Skeletons of dogs everywhere.
carcasses below sand. Fur and maggots.

Cliff and tent.
Wolfy dog.

This could be nowhere, or at the world's end.

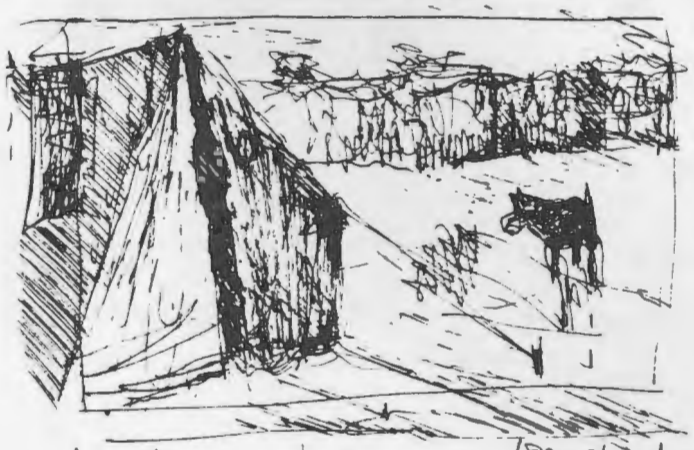
Riddley Walker:
the black of the dog in the
soun of the gray rain falling. p68

or perhaps
running dog



\ like graves
dog slinking
past.

cliffs in distance



tent + washing.

long shadows

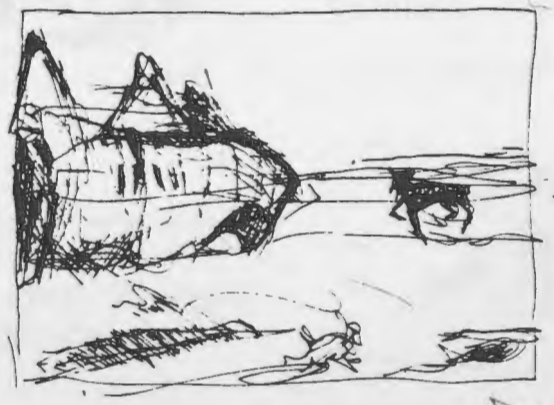
thin dog looking
around.

car / aeroplane wreck.

dog under tree in distance

~.

' pack of dogs.
'The wind crosses the brown land
unheard.' T.S. Eliot Wasteland



- flat space looking
down (pram pic)
wreckage in foreground
+ dog.

Wreck in flat space with
dog running past.

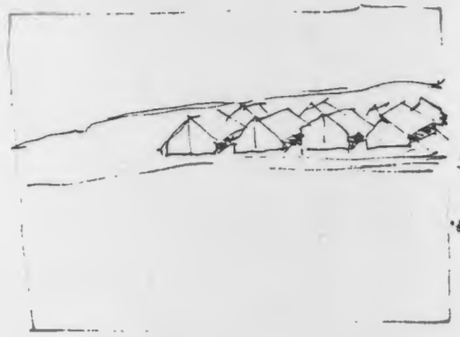
or rather cringing dog

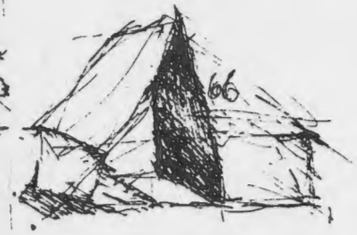
3rd June 87

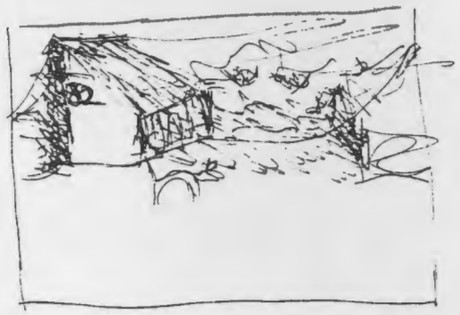
There full of vermin lay Argus, the hound. But directly he became aware of Odysseus' presence he wagged his tail and dropped his ears, though he lacked the strength now to come any nearer to his master. Yet Odysseus saw him out of the corner of his eye and brushed a tear away

The odyssey.

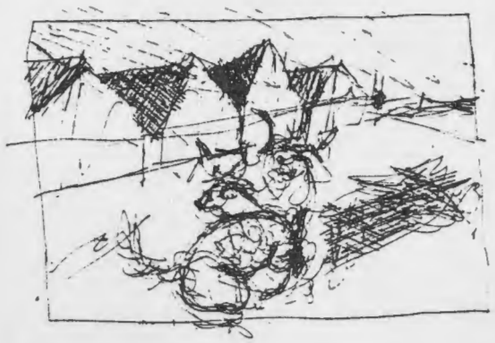
no 8 township camp.







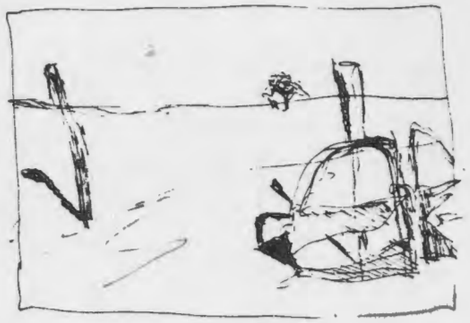
mating dogs - on hill.



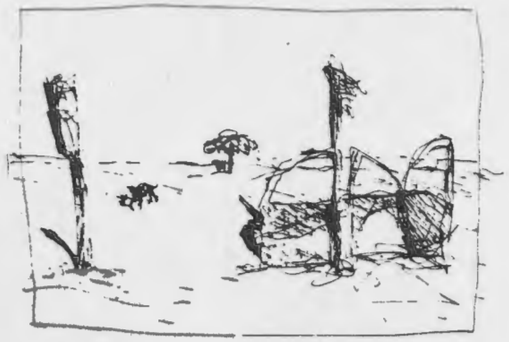
mating dogs in front of tents
late afternoon light

- from lone dog walking into picture some tents - activity - dogs back in a pack

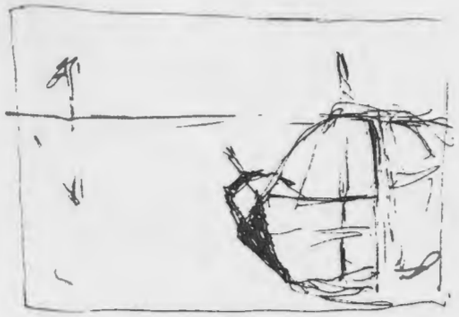
dog turning back to look at graves
— darker sky - darker transparency

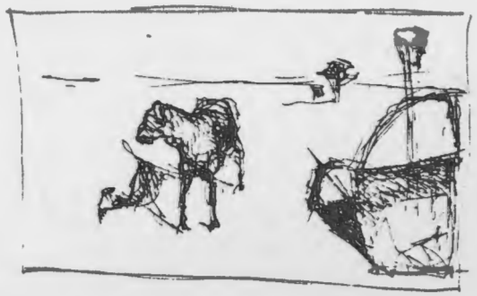


be aware of creating landscapes rather than just sticking objects/ elements. Look at ways to suggest isolation and nothing.



flat sand land
tree with dog + dog cringing - structure with car doors in front.





looking down on dog turning around
distance - tree with dog standing pole and car door

Which landscape?
P.N. or clay stretch?

...the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

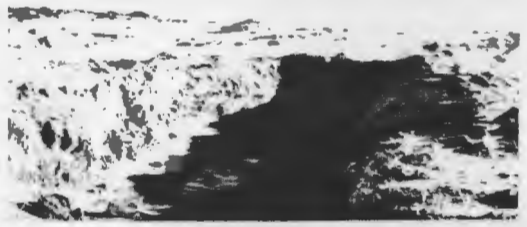
For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And nothing himself beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

Wallace Stevens: The Snowman

Series 2

This series introduces a landscape of destruction and devastation. Through the depiction of the burnt-out vehicle, the helicopters, the shelter and the trench, allusions to conflict and some of its consequences have been made.

WAR ZONE



erecting flag post

like fence across river

dark flat expanse - trench

go back to Blouberg - pics sand hills.

new series -

dogs now active - specific actions leaping, carrying trophies, etc. whatever. Not just standing, walking running through arbitrary landscape.

Sunday: Dog training

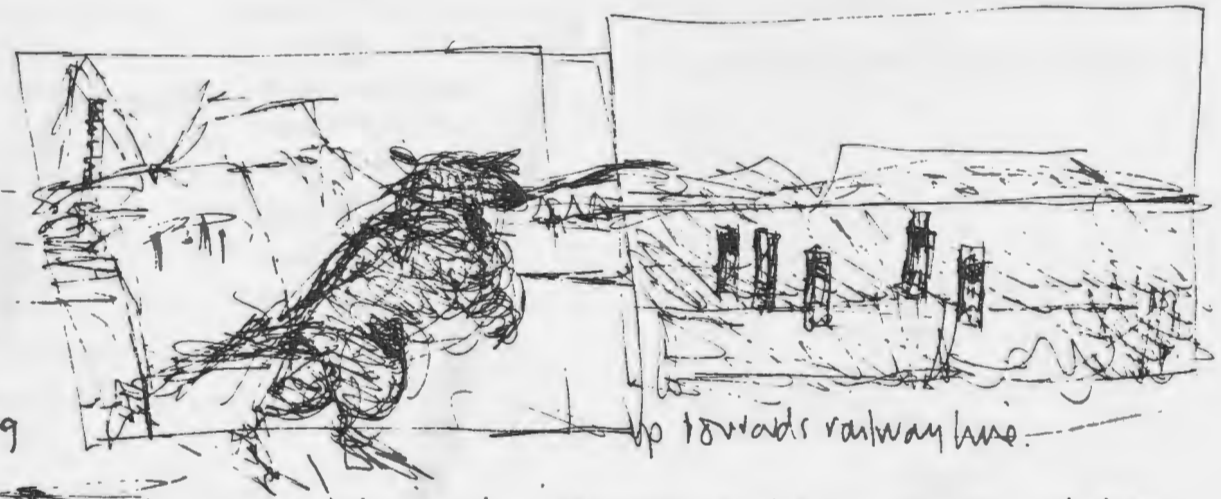
- close ups of dogs where face fills most of frame
- Alsatian attacking

other dog leaping away from you.

Dog training

Riddley p.96.

The jynt shadders were from girt machines o they wer gurner big things and crouching all broakin but not dead they cudnt dy there wer too much power in them. Where we wer stanning you cud hear the sea beyout us in the dark. Breaving and sying breaving and sying it wer like them machines wer breaving and sying in ther sleap.



- like flag.

up towards railway line.

dog leaping forward next to wreck which takes up most of the foreground.

dark sky - beach and hills - dog erecting pole

Riddley Walker p96 - shyning broakin machines

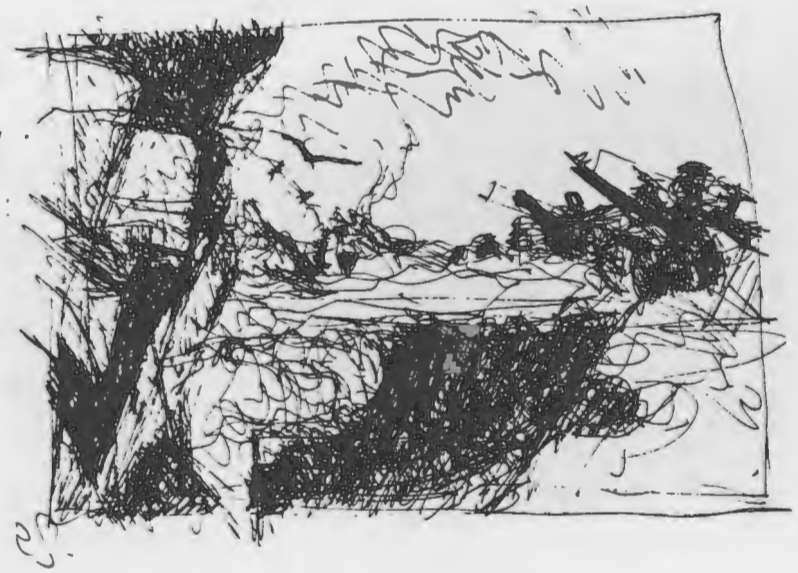
car/truck wreck, ditch horizon 2x cannons/ chassis

crow.

sky = Murzenberg beach upside down.

dark sky + heli - look at first screen - shiny blacks.

All Quiet on the Western Front



Ted Hughes - warriors of either side.

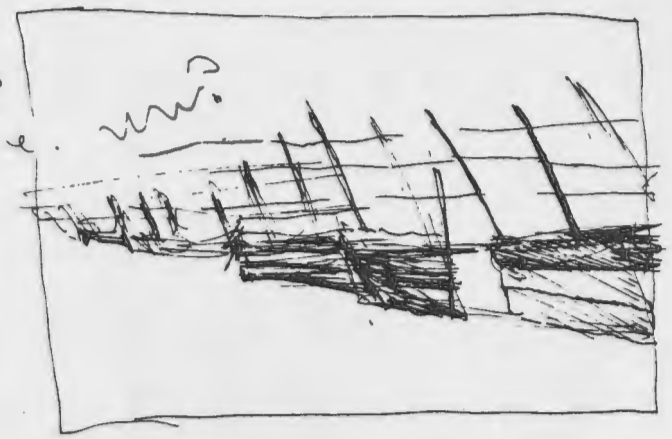
War between vitality and death.

dog coming up over hill
- returning warrior.

tracks

what behind here?

tents also
plus poles
perhaps clear sky?



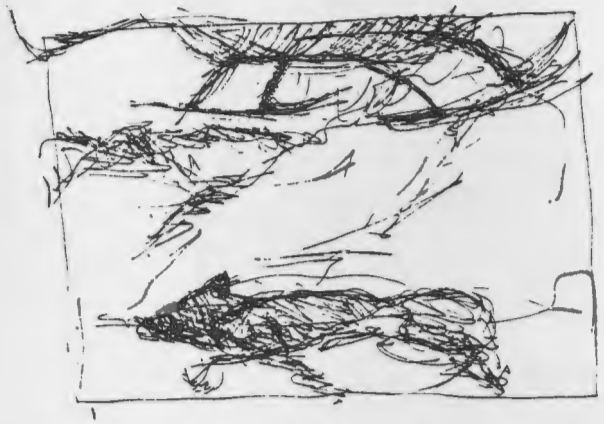
= fence across river barricades
tin drums stretched across

LEAPING DOG + HELI

Heat dog in b/w only - rest of pic in colour.
- shadow of man take away. too distracting.

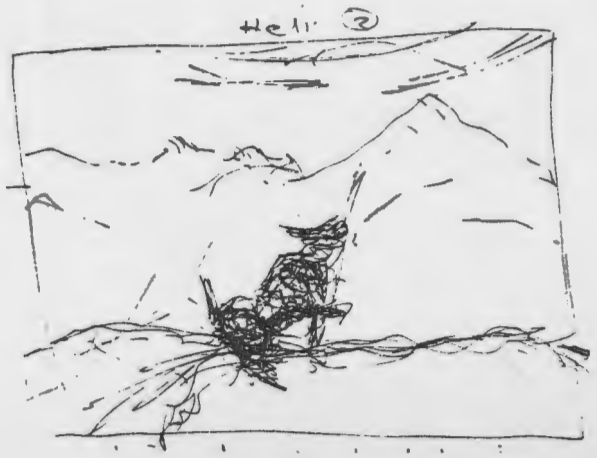
sl
dn want some indication of people.
heli.

slopes down into ditch.



dog lying
dead?
on the ground

on the dunes - heli - low.



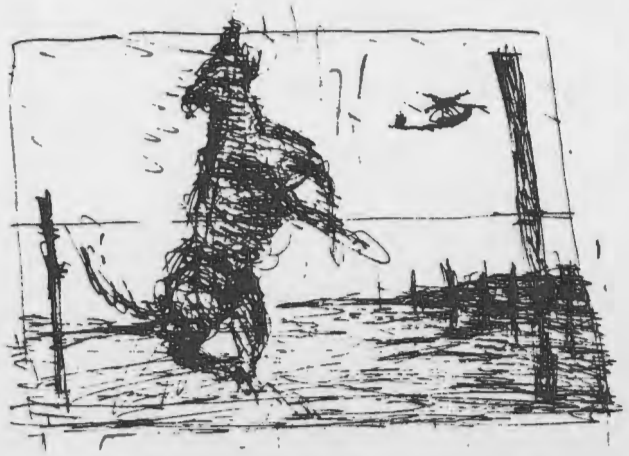
Heli ②

helicopter coming down

dark sky
storm

tail up
dog running
small in
distance

through wire



dog falling out of the sky
fences - barren earth
helicopter - war zone. blank sky perhaps or dark.

warrior holding stick

Now you are dying, do you hear
the pure silence, broken
by your excited dogs?
Now you are dying in the hands
of the stern authorities,
do you sense the precious aroma
of the sweet kingdom smashed forever?

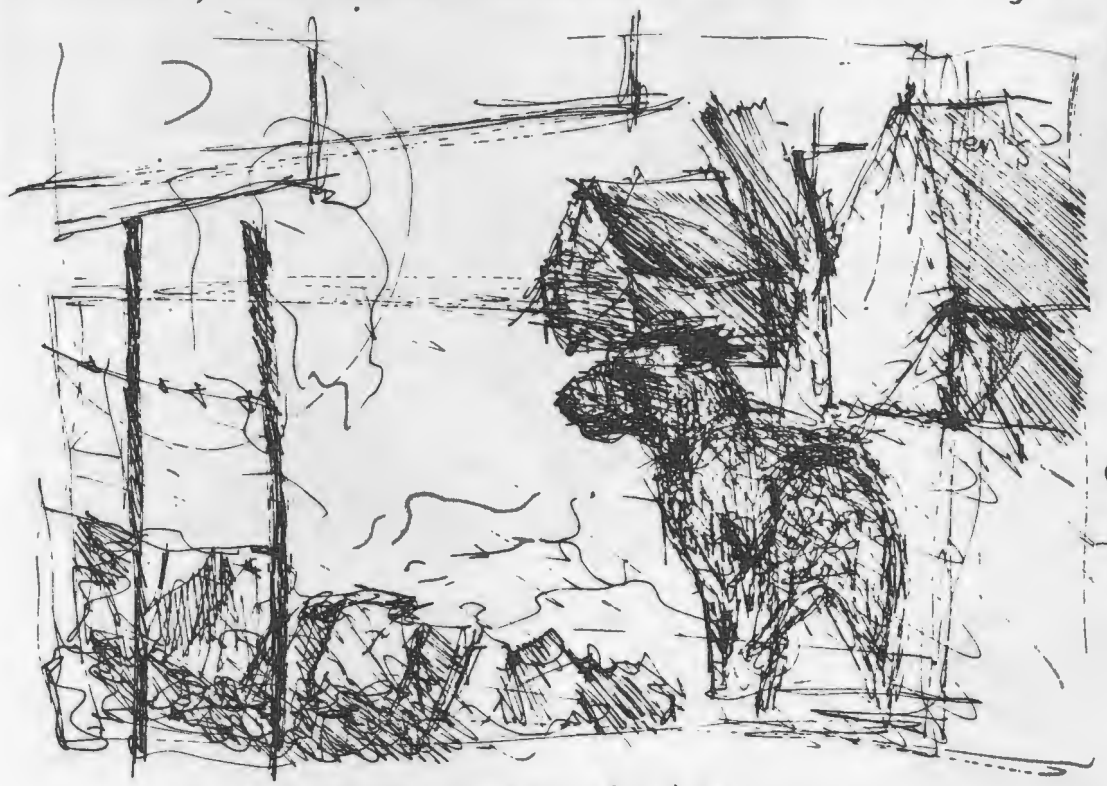
Pablo Neruda: The head on a pole

Series 3

In these four prints, I have constructed landscapes in which aspects of exploitation are portrayed. These include not only the exploitation of the land and its resultant depletion, but an attitude of disregard for its inhabitants.
In emphasizing the movement and heightened activity of the dogs in these images, I have attempted to symbolize resistance to these processes.

CRIT:
- technically prints must be absolutely convincing in collaging
- conceptually more complex – more probing

- what is print saying that photograph cannot?
- meaning must shift more substantially.

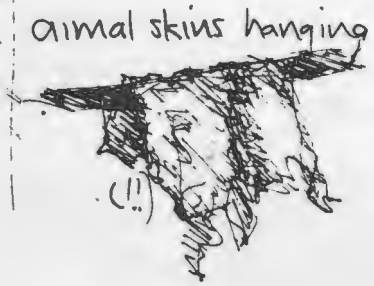


possibles – piece of tin roof or meathooks abbatoir.

dead horse:
3 incompatible views
1. on horse – looking down
2. landscape – eye level
3. pylons – up.

dog on hill-top – looking over settlement. things left behind.

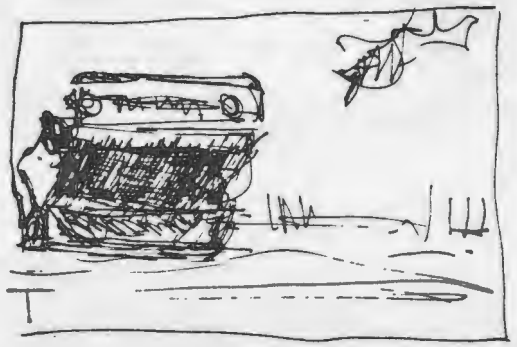
animal skins hanging



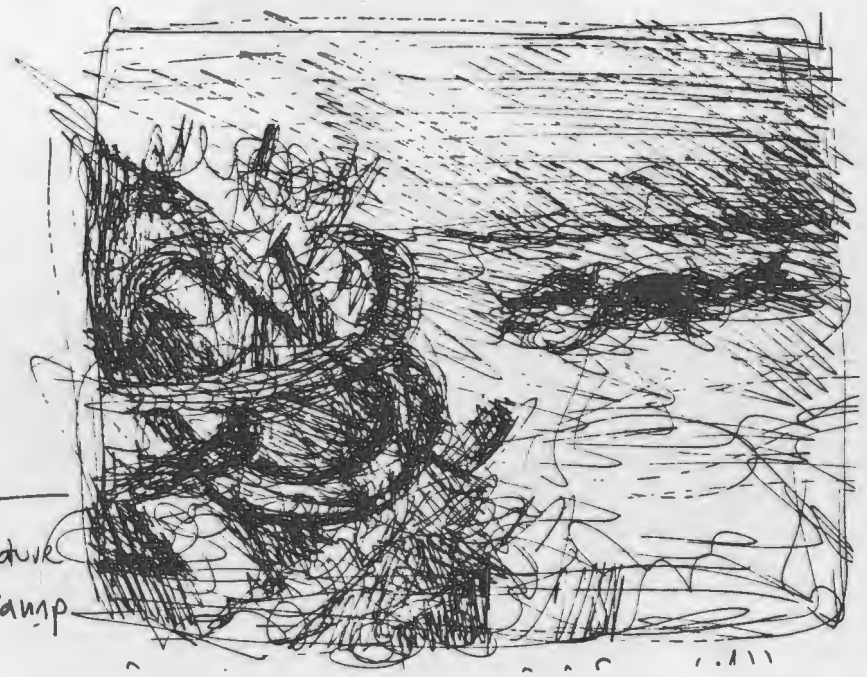
(!!)

dogs running – rubbler pipes

D FEB 15 →



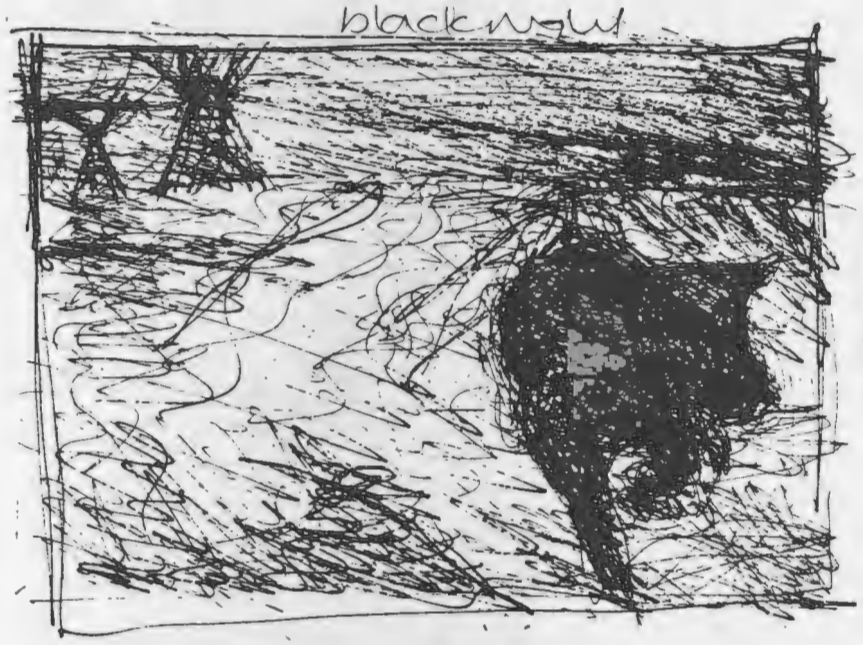
something with upturned car
- like huge icon
- remove bushes
- dog? hanging?



storm sky
pipes like giant creature
– Creature from the Swamp
– Swamp Thing!!

Dog leaning out of frame
row of rest of the pack on hill, barking

black night



colour problems - take polaroids.

remember:
dualistic vision of SA landscape
parched desolation and great beauty.
Eden and threat of Darkness

Is this cry a lament
lament - of what -?
of All battled for and lost.

FINISHED 27/10/87

~~Solve dog barking to the sun~~
dog in sky = spirit of first.
anguished. Symbolic destruction of ?

- truck - burnt out vessel
useless like poor barren dogs

maybe dead dog?

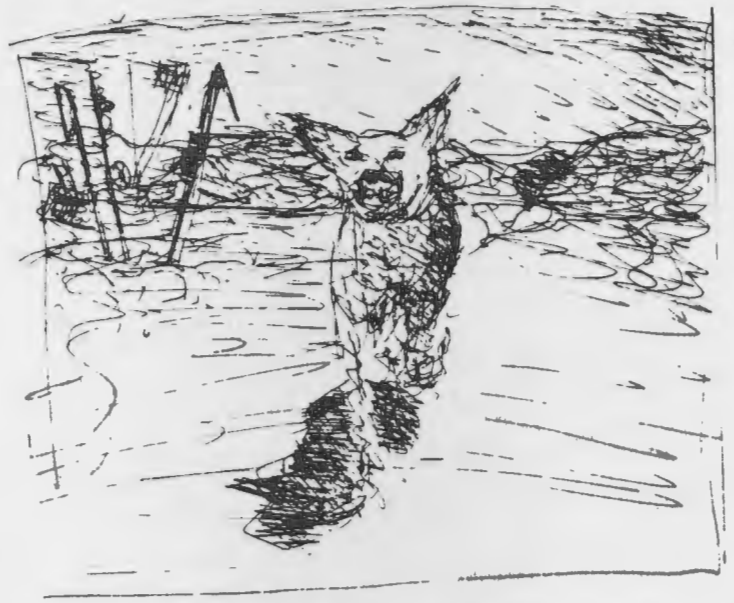
AT LAST A PLACE FOR DOGS
TO MATE

protective of injured / dying
dead.
Something of fear in its eyes.

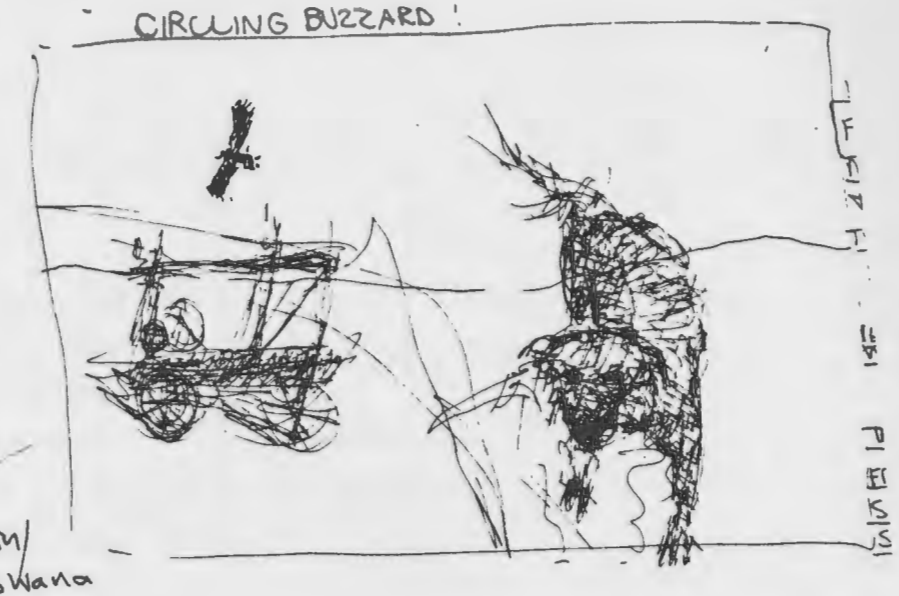
"But over the dark earth escaped
The infants cry, the mothers lament
The fathers curse."

Ted Hughes - Prometheus
on his crag.

- de - contextualized. structure?
dog hanging above landscape



CIRCLING BUZZARD !

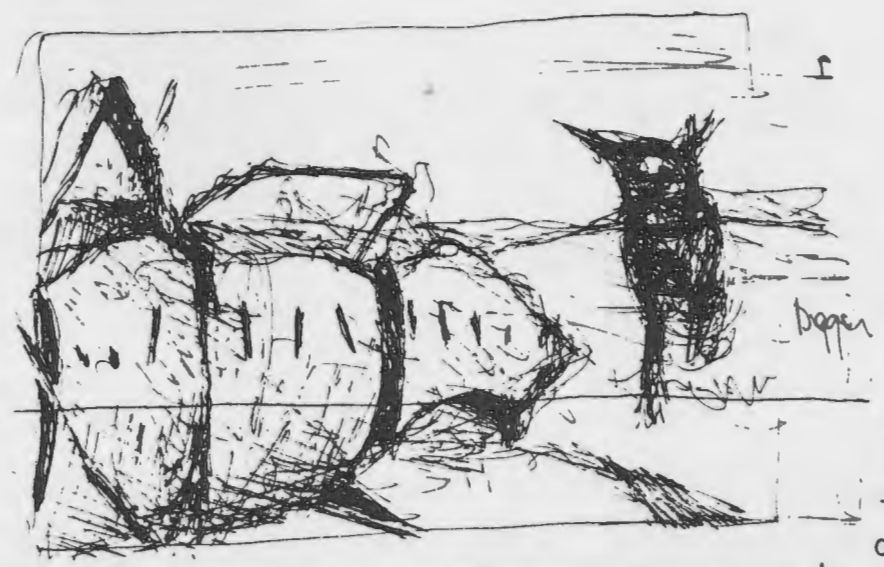


strange wagon/
pump from Botswana
Find a place for it. relic.

Karoo landscape like mating dogs
junk scattered inland like totems to lost era.

Change Gus from happy dog on the beach,
to veteran warrior.

- Lift him above the landscape - larger than life and the world.



Back to plane wreck. Huge in foreground.

In these prints - close up activity. Scenes rather than endless stretches. Doing. battle with life. Responding!

of dogs:
"... so tragic a reminder of the lost age when we human beings branched off and left them: left them to eternal inarticulateness and slavery. Why? Their eyes seem to ask us." Edith Wharton in Kenneth Clark. p. 51.

long afternoon shadows - dogs close up.
cliffs behind from mine - muddy water

GOMBRICH

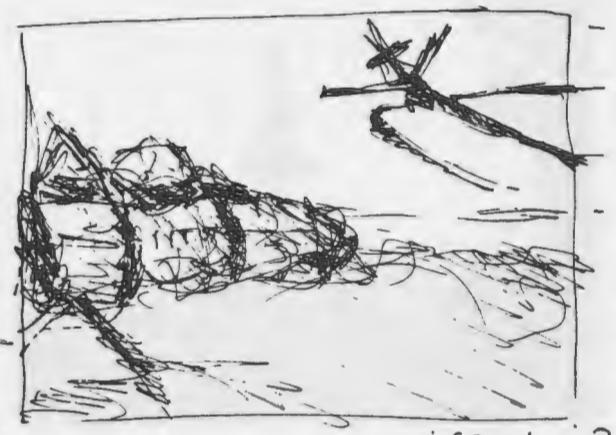
What a picture means to a viewer is strongly dependant on his past experience and knowledge. In this respect the visual image is not a mere representation of "reality", but a symbolic system.

A curse on dog and man,
the horrible howl in the unbroken
forest, and the stealthy
walk of the iron and the bandit.
And a curse on the spiny crown
of the wild thornbush
that did not leap like a hedgehog
to protect the invaded cradle.

Pablo Neruda: The head on a pole

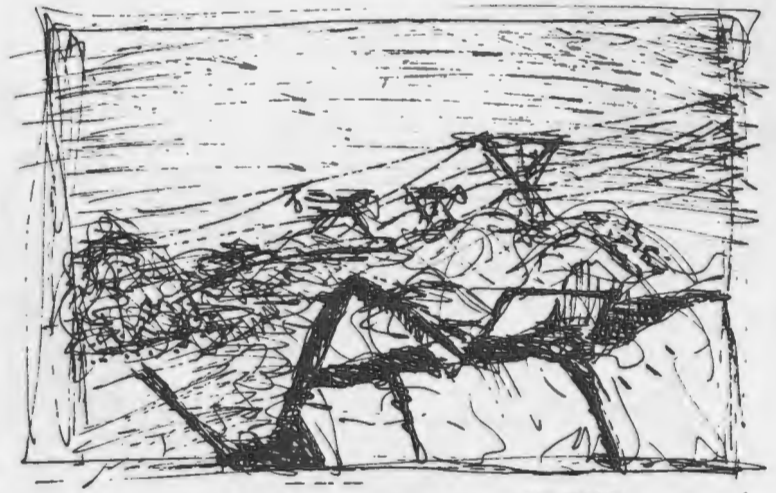
Series 4

In these three prints, there is a shift from a rural to an urban environment. Refuse and junk have become the very substance of the landscape. Through the use of shallow space and dense polluted skies, it was my intention to give visual form to a feeling of claustrophobia. The active process of disintegration is indicated by the inclusion of the magnetic hoist, and the visual fragmentation and partially dissolved forms of the animals.



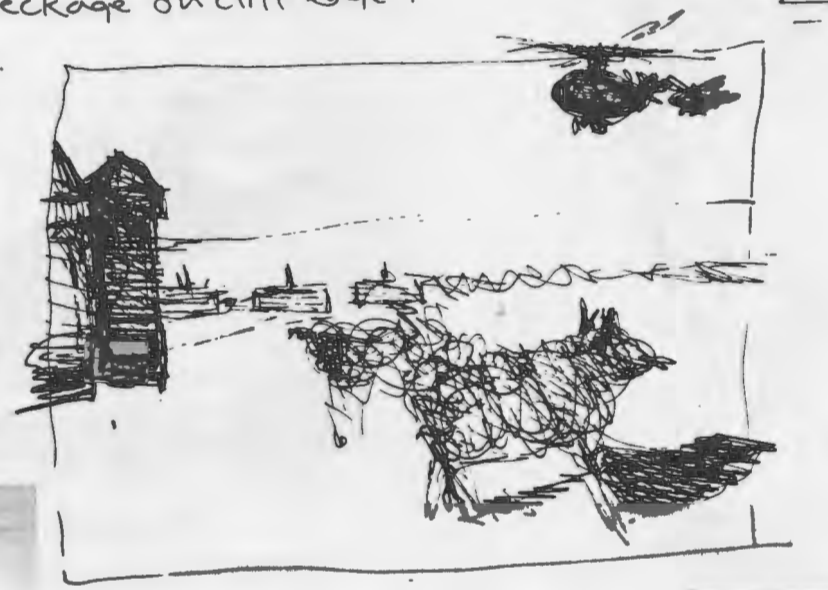
maybe "war zone" can be moved to city landscape.

cities = collective self portrait images of hollowness and chaos.



drop horizon, maybe find another one - wreckage on cliff edge? looking down.

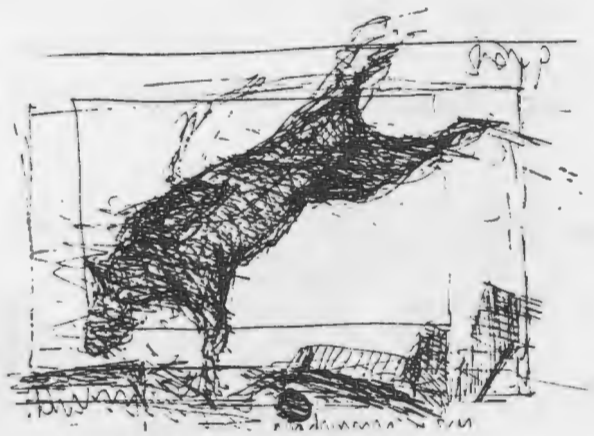
FIND A PLACE FOR MATING DOGS! what a search!



poles fence wreckage.

dogs hanging falling through landscape.
- only spatial ref. poles, unidentifiable machinery.

Helicopters here too literal and obvious.



at the mercy of
flying dog now in junkyard. machines technology

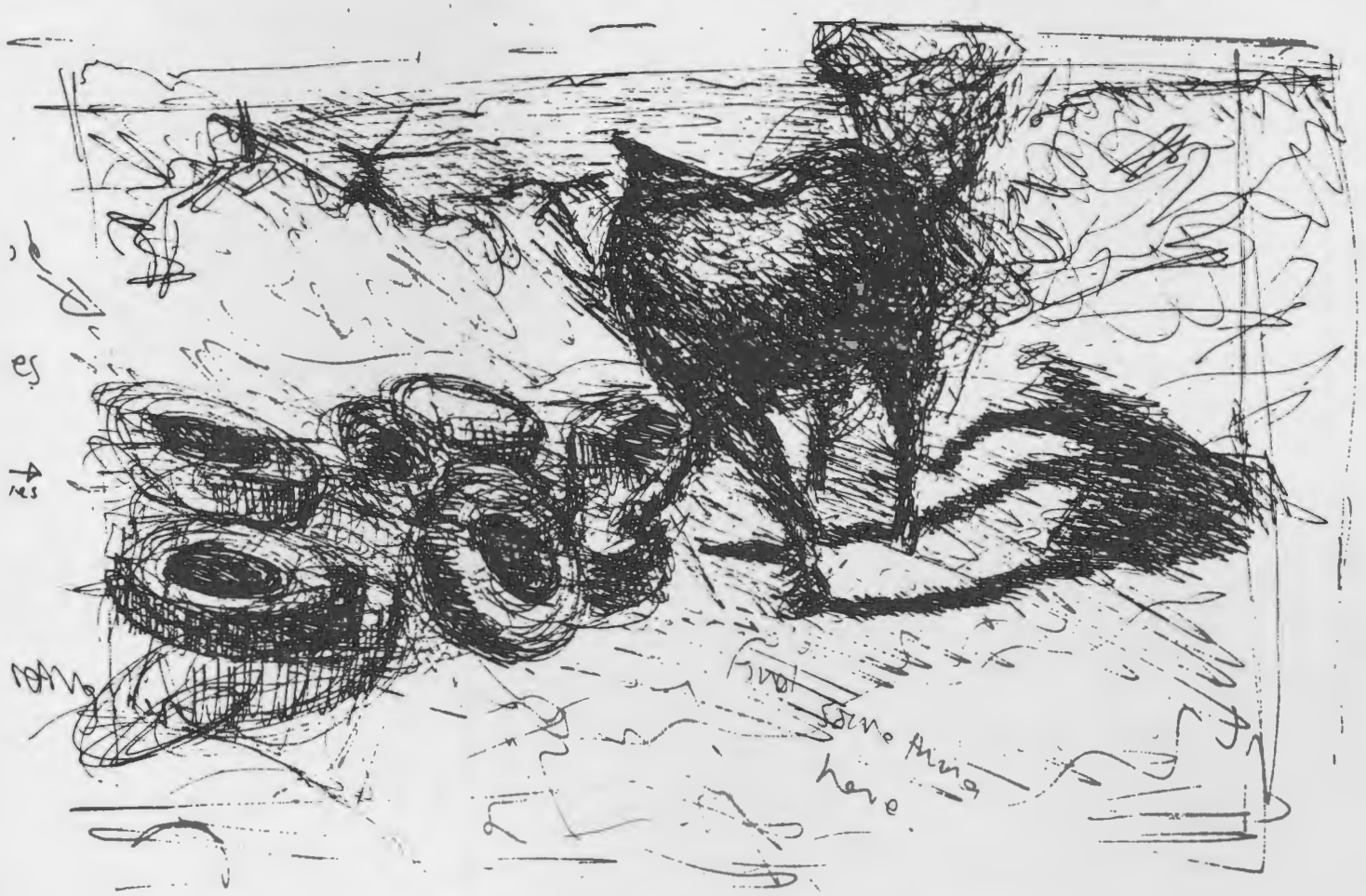
dog looking back at
mountain of junk
perhaps natural mountains
in distance.

- go back to Riddley Walker for these
- perhaps landscapes with no dogs
- dog felt through absence
- transformation use junk in way not normally associated with it.
- in Riddley Walker - what are remains used of
- people who live off refuse + waste dumps
- scavengers

25th April Vissershok

dog eat dog.

dump landscapes all with dark murky skies
have both dogs in, confusing? yes but fragmented like landscape.



Find something for foreground that looks right

" And among those hunting dogs,...
Your dog was your soul,

Head on a pole
Pablo Neruda.

Norman MacCaig:
Hotel Room, 12th Floor.

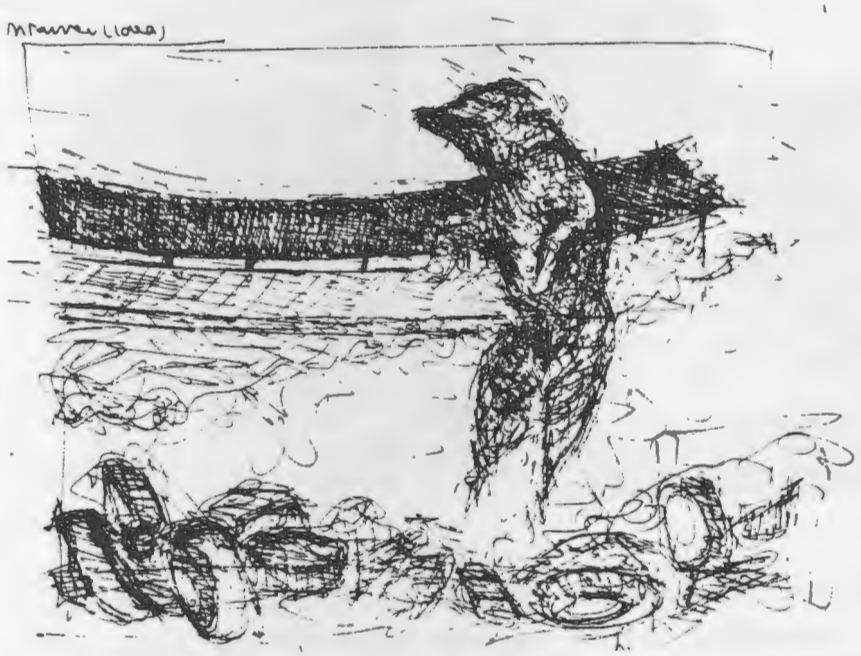
The frontier is never
somewhere else. And no stockades
can keep the midnight out.

And the trees about me,
Let them be dry and leafless; let the rocks
Groan with contiual surges; and behind me
Make all a desolation.
T. S. Eliot: Sweeney Erect.

Series 5

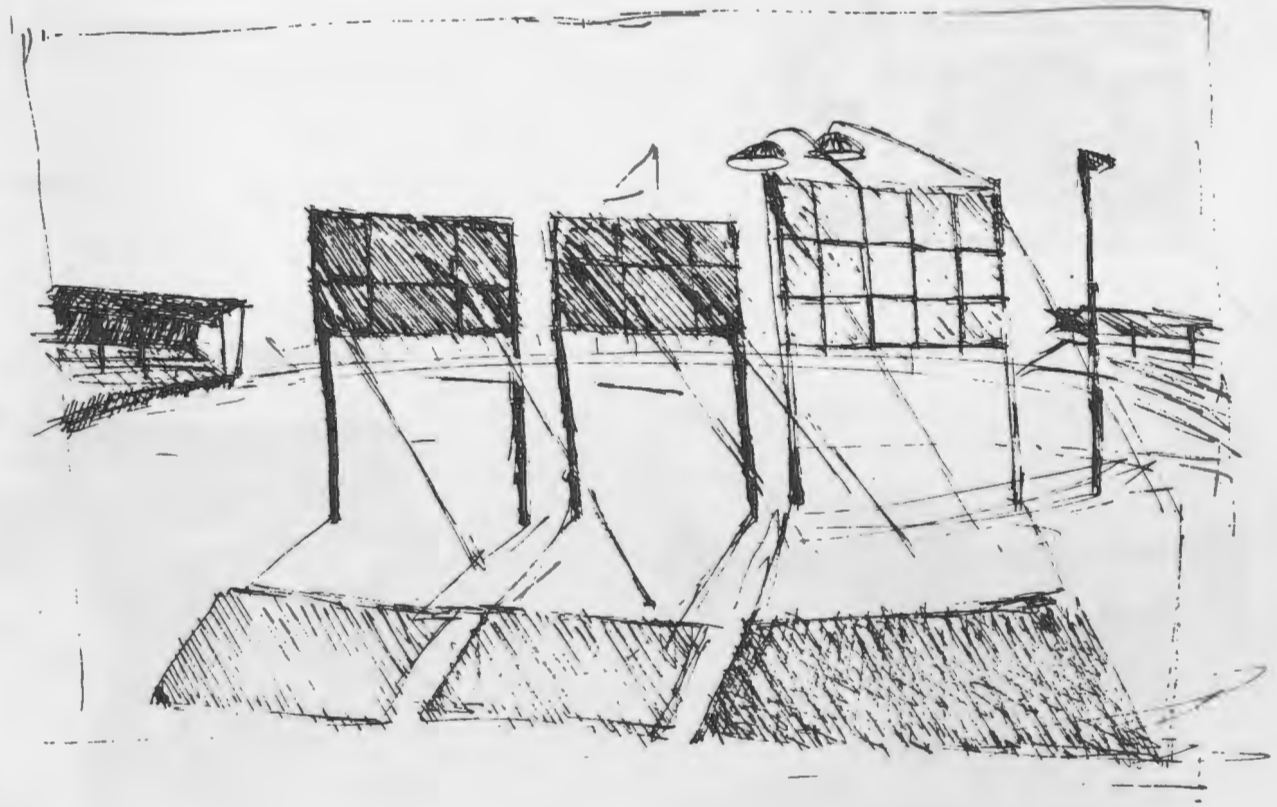
In this triptych the depiction of the stadium defines the landscape as an arena. The heightened contrasts between the stark landscape and the dramatic sky contribute to an atmosphere of anticipation. In these prints, I have synthesized the major thematic concerns of the previous prints in order that they should form the conclusion to the thesis.

STADIUMS:
· battle till death
- displays of power
- symbol of resistance

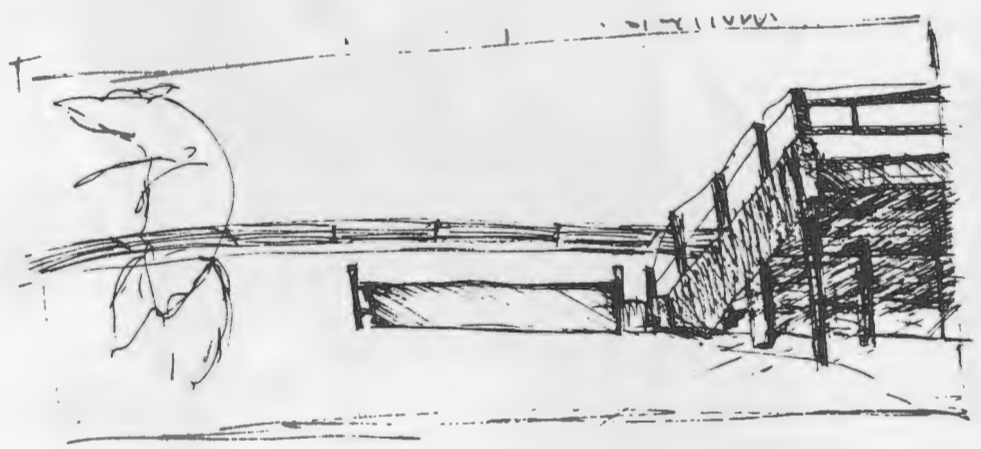


is this the last show of fight, courage, how to end.

perhaps empty arena - waiting - tense expectancy.



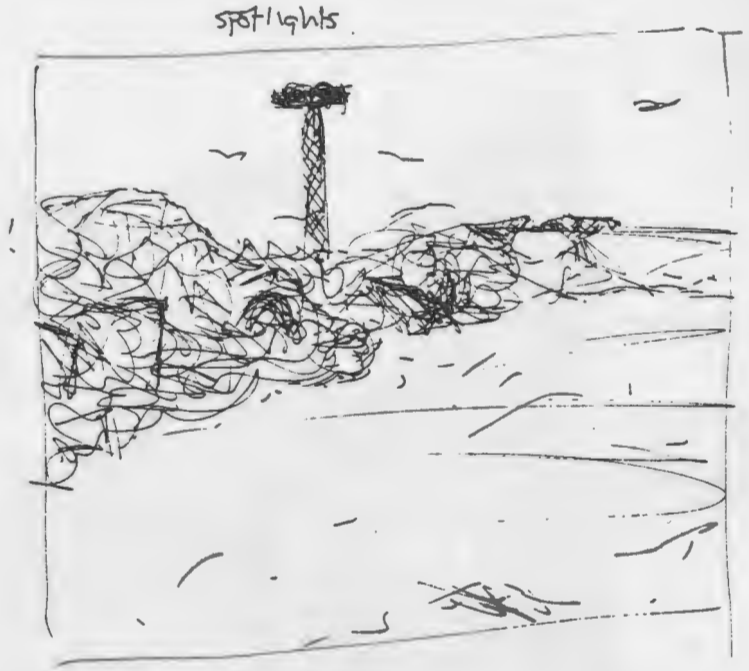
And all being is flaming suffering - Franz Marc



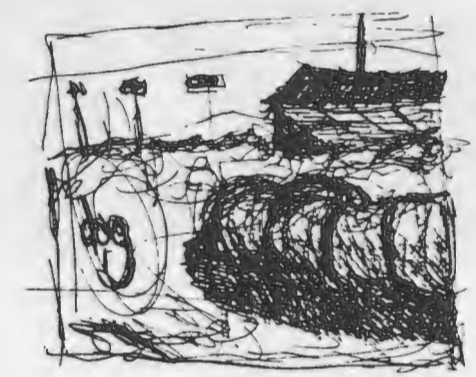
... and a fatigued and
ruined heart
that went on fighting.
But they have come back,
you have received them
into the immensity of the
open lands.

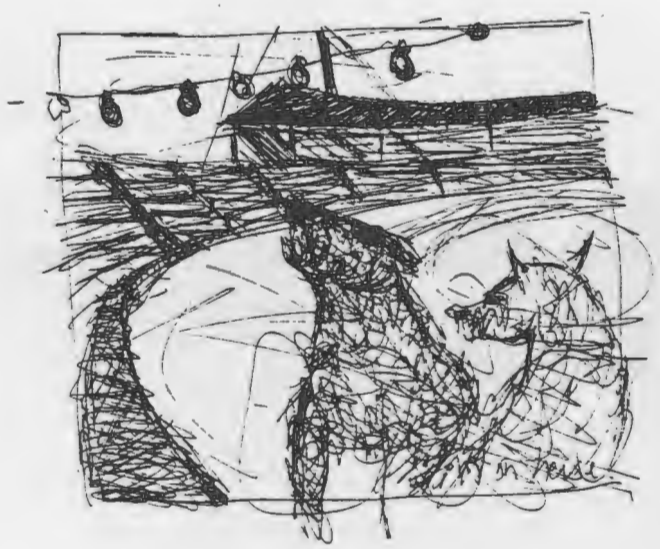
Pablo Neruda.

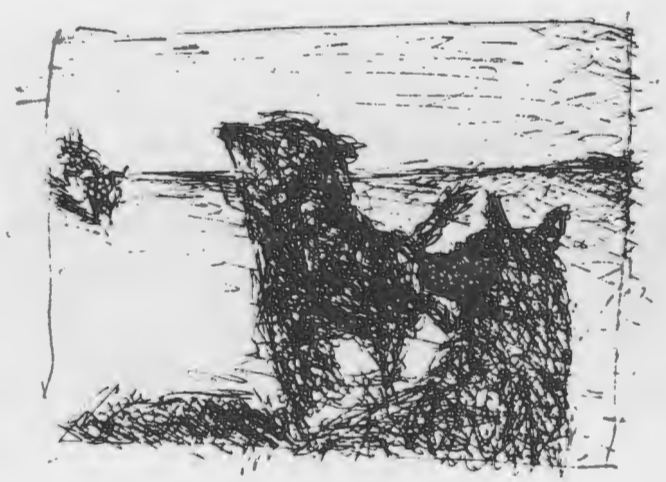
Karen Blixen. Out of Africa.
... and animals will again wander back along
way, and go through danger and sufferings to
recover their lost identity, in the surroundings that they know.

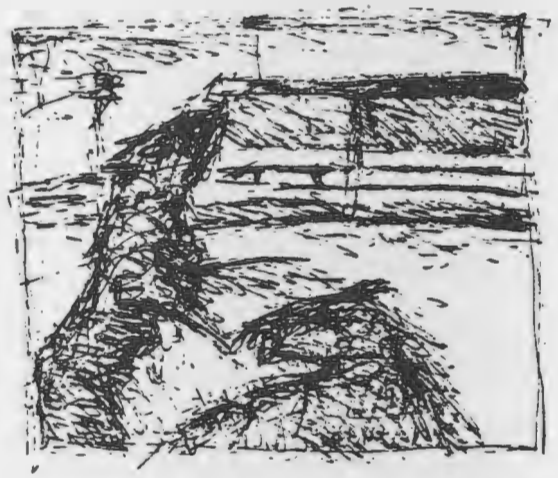


put in
watchtower.



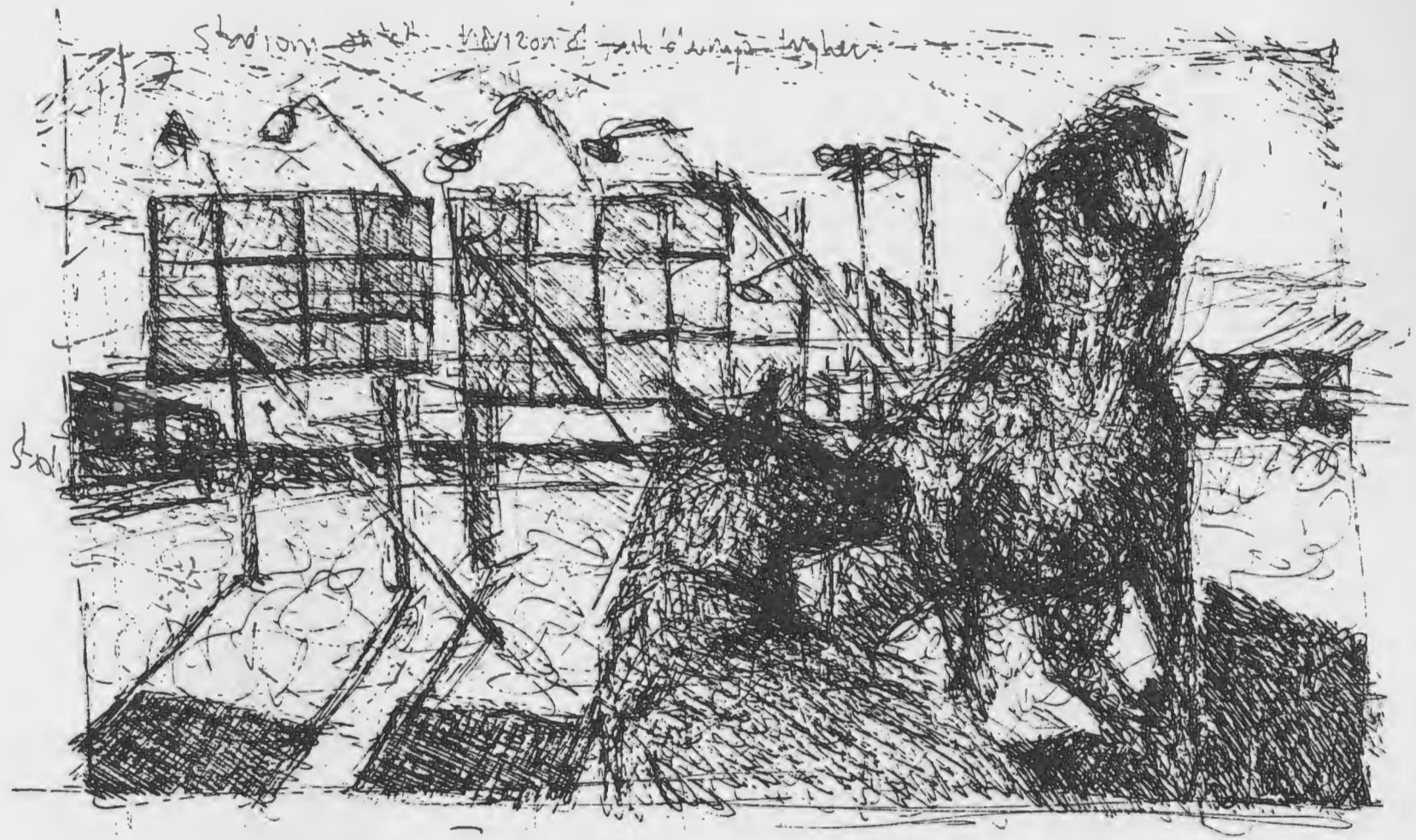






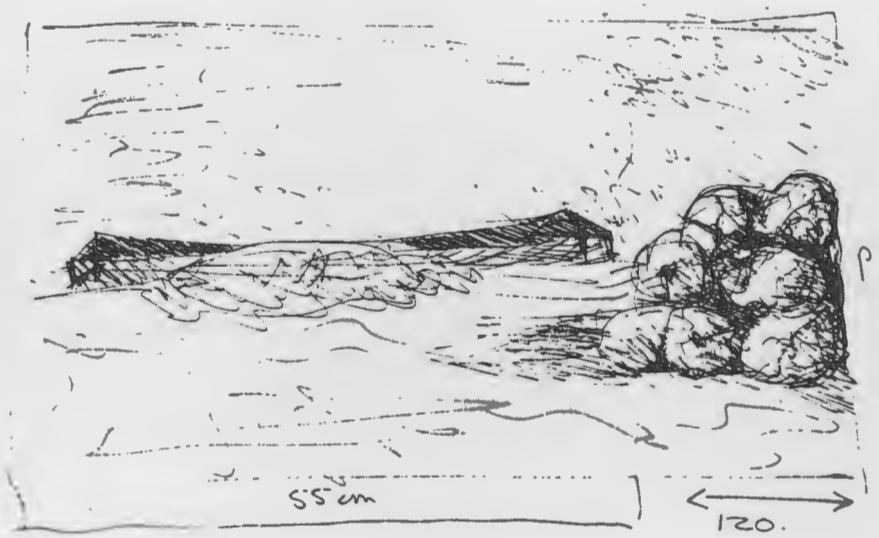
Norse Folk Lore.

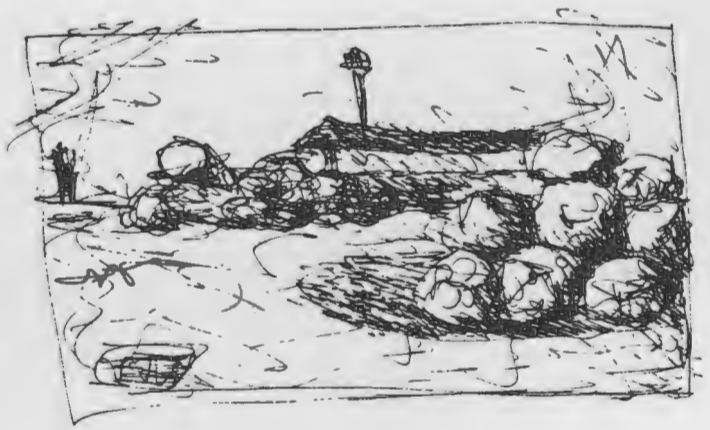
Brothers will battle
And kill each other
Sister kin
Commit foul acts
There's woe in the world
Lechery rampant
An axe age, a sword age
Shields are sundered
A storm age
A wolf age
Before the world crumbles
No mercy or quarter
Will man give to man.



A SWORD AGE - A WOLF AGE

lost landscape - no dogs - exploding sky.
↑ needs service.





notwithstanding the cold silence of teeth,
the hatred of eyes,
the struggle of dying beasts, gardians of oblivion -

There is one hour alone, long as an artery,
and between the acid and the patience of crumpled time

We voyage through
parting the syllables of fear and tenderness
interminably done away with, done to death.

Pablo Neruda: Furies and Sufferings

INDEX TO THE PRINTS

Should you ask me where I come from, I must talk
with broken things,
with fairly painful utensils,
with great beasts turned to dust as often as not
and my afflicted heart.

Pablo Neruda: There's no Forgetting.

1. Series: 1
   1987
   Image size: 450 x 330.
   Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
   Edition: A.P. x 5; 10

2. Series 1
1987
Image size: 450 x 330.
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 4; 10

3. Series 1
1987
Image size: 477 x 330.
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 3; 10

4. Series 2
1987
Image size: 505 x 375.
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 5; 10

5. Series 2
1987
Image size: 555 x 365.
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 5; 10

6. Series 2
1987
Image size: 505 x 375.
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 3; 10

7. Series 3
1988
Image size: 570 x 440.
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 3; 10

8. Series 3
1988
Image size: 610 x 440.
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 2; 10

9. Series 3
1987
Image size: 565 x 430.
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 5; 10

10. Series 3
1987
Image size: 585 x 395
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 4; 10

11. Series 4
1988
Image size: 600 x 570
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 3; 10

12. Series 4
1987
Image size: 735 x 540
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 0; 10

13. Series 4
1988
Image size: 795 x 550
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 3; 10

14. Series 5
1988
Image size: 875 x 545
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Edition: A.P. x 4; 10

15. Series 5
1988
Image size: 860 x 550
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 4; 10

16. Series 5
1988
Image size: 850 x 550
Medium: screenprinted, photographic, off-set lithograph
Edition: A.P. x 4 ; 10

CATALOGUE OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Mine dump at Diepkloof. January, 1986.

2. Port Nolloth. May, 1987.

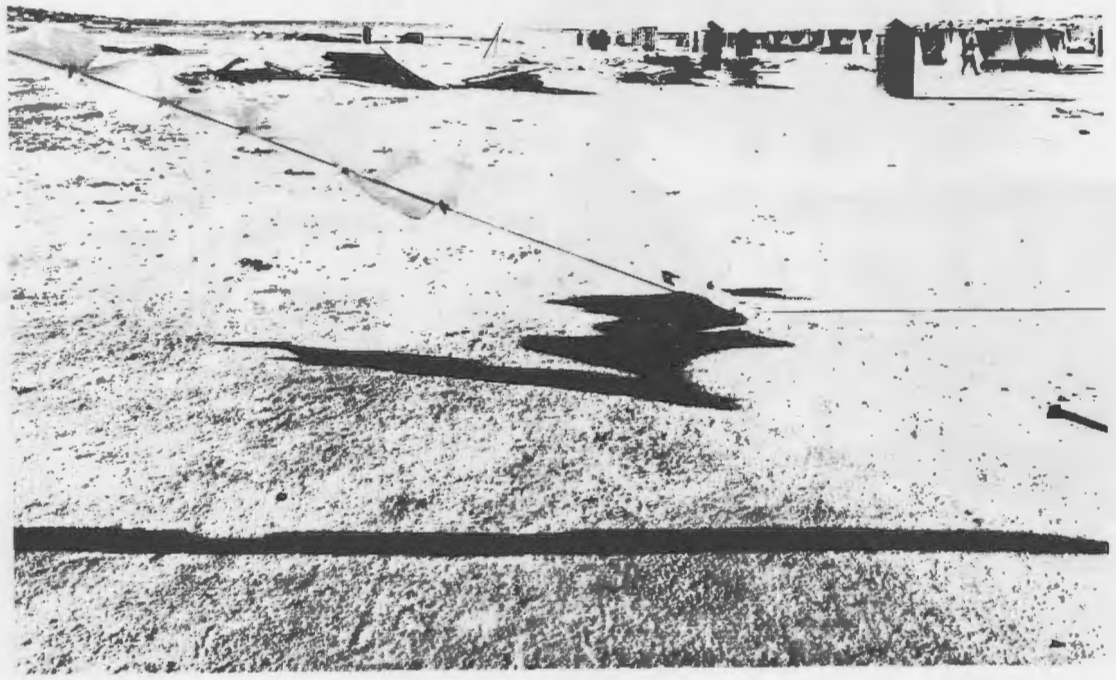
3. Muizenburg, Cape Town.

4. Karoo. November, 1987.

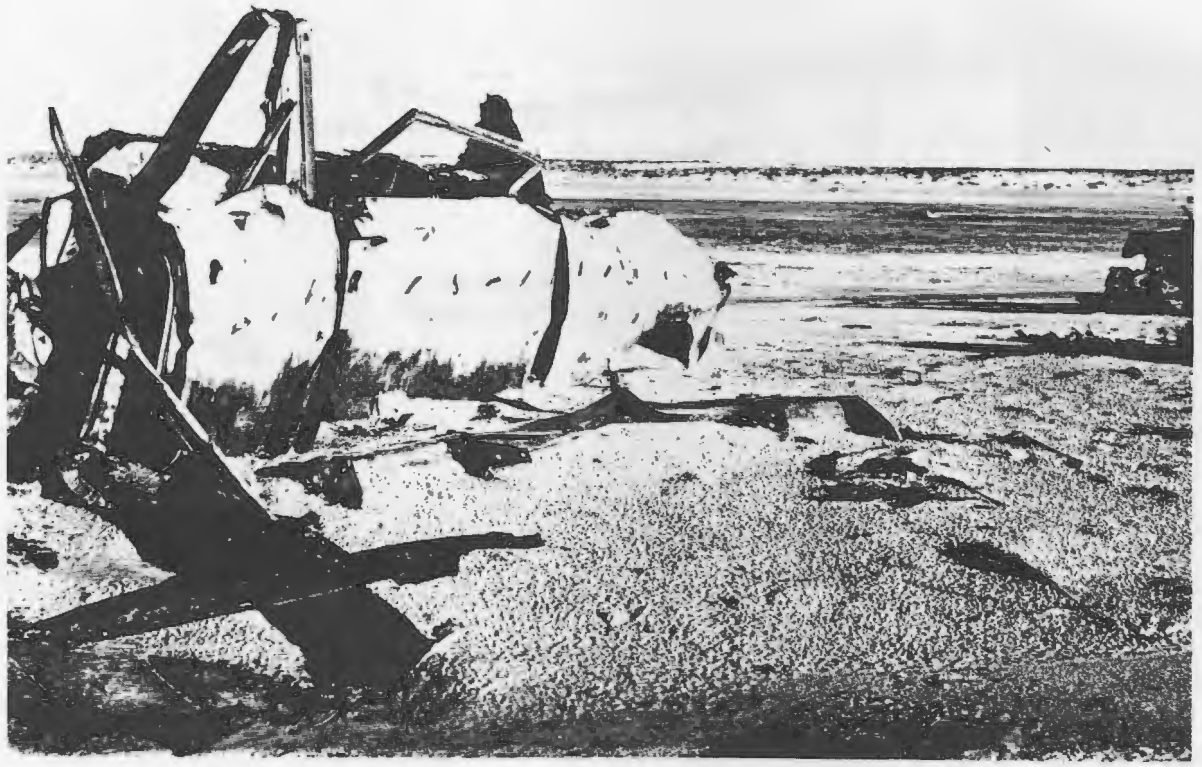
5. Karoo. November, 1987.

6. Port Nolloth. May, 1987.

7. Steinkopf. May,1987.



8. Port Nolloth. May, 1987.



9. Port Nolloth. May, 1987.

10. Port Nolloth. May, 1987.

11. Port Nolloth. May, 1987.

12. Port Nolloth. May, 1987.

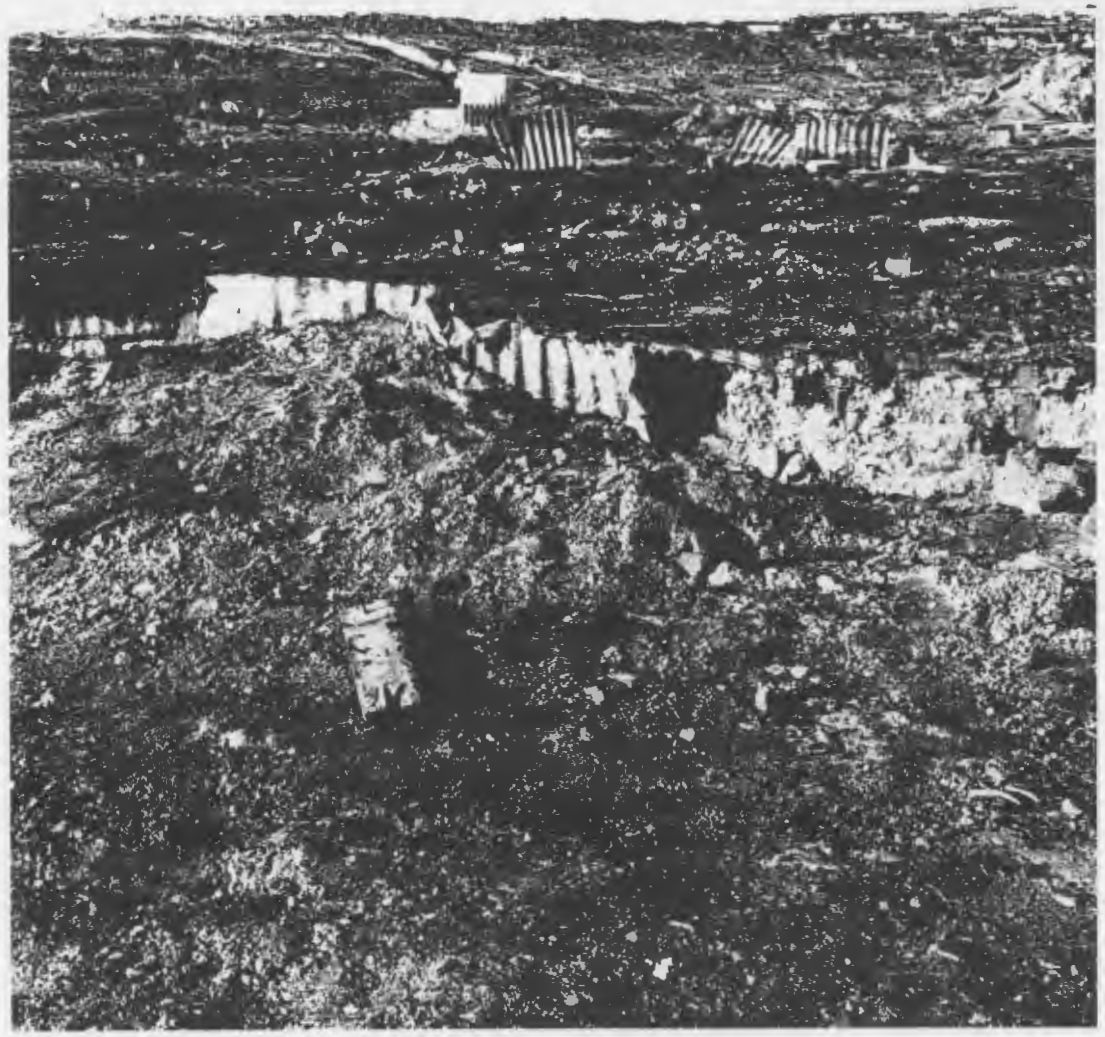
13. Crossroads. June, 1986.

14. Crossroads. June, 1986.

15. Crossroads. June, 1986.

16. Crossroads. June, 1986.

17. Crossroads. June, 1986.



18. Crossroads. June, 1986.

19. Crossroads. June, 1986.

20. Waste dump, Vissershok. April, 1988.

21. Waste dump, Vissershok. April, 1988.

22. Waste dump, Vissershok. April, 1988.

23. Waste dump, Vissershok. April, 1988.

24. Waste dump, Vissershok. April, 1988.

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It was a song of love and faraway places, a lament of love and yearning addressed to spring, which was still far off, to the cities from which we came, to life's infinite spaces.

Pablo Neruda: Memoirs. p.184.